

EAST CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE IN THE MIDDLE AGES, 450-1450

Christianity in Roman Scythia

*Ecclesiastical Organization and
Monasticism (4th to 7th Centuries)*



Ionuț Holubeanu



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BRILL

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Introduction: The Land between the Danube and the Black Sea in Late Antiquity

The land between the Danube and the Black Sea (the present-day region of Dobruja in Romania and Bulgaria) fell under Roman rule between the years 44 and 29/28 BC, after the death of the Dacian king Burebista (82–44 BC). It became part of the Roman province of Moesia in the middle of the 1st century AD and of Moesia Inferior under Domitian (81–96). Scythia was organized as a distinct Roman province between the years 286 and 293, during the administrative reform initiated by Emperor Diocletian (284–305).

The name Scythia had also been used for the Istro-Pontic land before Diocletian's reign. Its oldest attestation appears in a Greek inscription dating to the beginning of the 2nd century BC, uncovered at Histria (now Istria, Romania).¹ At the beginning of the 1st century AD, the Greek geographer Strabo mentions that the region received the name of 'Scythia Minor' ('Μικρά Σκυθία,' 'Lesser Scythia') as a result of the mass settlement there of some of the nomadic Scythians (of Iranian origin) from the north of the Black Sea.² Through the creation of the Roman province, the old name of the region acquired an official character within the administration of the empire.

Scythia had an important strategic role within the plan of the military organization of the Eastern Roman Empire, especially after the foundation of Constantinople in the early 4th century. Together with the neighbouring province of Moesia Secunda, it was the outpost for the defense of the Eastern imperial capital, especially against barbarian attacks coming from across the Danube.³

Within the administrative organization of the empire, Scythia was part of the diocese of Thrace, with a capital city at Tomi (now Constanța, Romania),

1 Dionisie M. Pippidi, *Inscriptiile din Scythia Minor, grecești și latine* [The Greek and Latin Inscriptions of Scythia Minor], 1 (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1983), no. 15, line 16, p. 84.

2 Strabo, *Geographica* VII.4.5 and 5.12, 2, ed. Gustav Kramer (Berlin: Nicolai, 1847), pp. 39^{17–22} and 52^{18–20}; Strabo, *Geography*, trans., intro., and notes Duane W. Roller (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 305 and 311.

3 Ion Barnea, "Perioada Dominatului" [The Dominate], in Radu Vulpe and Ion Barnea, *Din istoria Dobrogei* [A History of Dobruja], 2 (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1968), pp. 369–378 and 389–390; Alexandru Barnea, "La Dobroudja aux IV^e–VII^e siècles de n.è." in Alexandru Suceveanu and Alexandru Barnea, *La Dobroudja Romaine* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1991), pp. 154–156; Mihail Zahariade, *Scythia Minor. A History of a Later Roman Province (284–681)* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 2006), pp. 40–42.

situated on the Black Sea coast. Its borders were marked by the Danube River to the west and north, without the Delta from the mouth of the river, by the Black Sea coast to the east, and in the south, in the area neighbouring Moesia Secunda, mainly by the course of the rivers Sukha Reka, toward the Danube, and Batova, toward the Black Sea shore (see map 3). The province was led by a governor (*praeses*) who was in charge of civil affairs, and a military commander (*dux*), who controlled and commanded the provincial army. In 536, Justinian I (527–565) established a *quaestura exercitus* with a seat in Odessos (now Varna, Bulgaria), containing the Roman provinces of Moesia Secunda, Scythia, Cyprus, Caria, and the Islands. The provinces kept their individual identity within this new administrative structure, despite the fact that the presiding official (the *quaestor*) was responsible for the entire area. The position of Justinian I's *quaestura exercitus* was discarded shortly before 587, when the ducal system was reinstated in the region.⁴

The land of Scythia had a varied topography, from mountains and low hills to fields, as well as the terrain of the delta and the littoral. In the central and southern part there were ravines whose slopes, pierced by caves, offered favourable conditions to the creation of monastic complexes. In the first half of the 5th century, Saint John Cassian, who was from Scythia, revived the image of his homeland and pointed to “the recesses of the woods that would not only delight the heart of a monk, but would also furnish him with a plentiful supply of food.”⁵ Regarding the climate, ancient authors mentioned almost exclusively the harsh winters there, much different from the Mediterranean ones.⁶ In the first quarter of the 6th century, Saint Dionysius Exiguus, while in Rome, noted that his home province, Scythia, “is proved to be terrible both for its cold

4 Barnea, “La Dobroudja,” pp. 155–157; Zahariade, *Scythia Minor*, pp. 22, 39–40, and 49–60. For the identification of the border between Scythia and Moesia Secunda, see: Sergey Torbatov, “Procop. De Aedif. IV, 7, 12–14 and the Historical Geography of Moesia Secunda,” *Archaeologia Bulgarica* 4 (2000), no. 3, pp. 70–75; On *Quaestura exercitus Iustiniani*, see: Sergey Torbatov, “*Quaestura exercitus*: Moesia Secunda and Scythia under Justinian,” *Archaeologia Bulgarica* 1 (1997), no. 3, pp. 78–87; Florin Curta, “*Quaestura exercitus*: The Evidence of Lead Seals,” *Acta Byzantina Fennica* 1 [n.s.] (2002), pp. 9–26; Alexandru Madgearu, “Un eșalon logistic din armata romano-bizantină din secolul al VI-lea—*quaestura exercitus Iustiniani*” [A Logistic Echelon of the Romano-Byzantine Army from the 6th Century AD—*quaestura exercitus Iustiniani*], *Gândirea militară românească* 4 (2009), pp. 189–194.

5 Iohannes Cassianus, *Conlationes XXIIII XXIV.I.3*, ed. Michael Petschenig, (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*) 13/2 (Vienna: C. Gerold's Sohn, 1886), p. 675^{3–8}; John Cassian, *The Conferences*, trans. Edgar C.S. Gibson, (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*) 11/11 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1994), p. 1363.

6 Zahariade, *Scythia Minor*, pp. 8–19.

and its barbarians,” but revealed that this reality did not affect in any way the evolution of monastic life and the theological instruction of the monks there.⁷

Scythia had important economic resources. From this point of view, it was the most favoured of the four Danubian provinces (Moesia Prima, Dacia Ripensis, Moesia Secunda, and Scythia). Nevertheless, it was not part of the category of great production areas of the Eastern Empire and was not able to provide by itself for its economic needs. However, the Black Sea and the navigable course of the Danube favoured the trade with Constantinople, with richer eastern provinces, and with the northern Black Sea cities, as Chersonesus, which contributed to its economic development. Moreover, intense commercial relations existed in the 4th century with the Gothic communities to the north of the Danube, Scythia being also a transit territory for the goods exported there from other regions of the empire. The creation of that *quaestura exercitus* in 536 contributed both to the provisioning of the troops in Scythia and to the intensification of the commercial relations with Cyprus, Caria, and the Islands.⁸

The creation of Scythia province was followed by the reorganization of the army in the region. Its defense was entrusted to legions I Iovia and II Herculia and to numerous auxiliary units and naval forces. During the Tetrarchy, troops of legion II Herculia in Scythia were detached also to the Crimean Peninsula, in Chersonesus. An important reorganization of the army in Scythia took place in the middle of the 4th century, when new regiments of riparian type created by Constantius II (337–361) were dispatched along the border. After the disaster of Hadrianopolis in 378 (see below), Gothic and Alanic contingents were incorporated into the Roman army, whereas after 453 the imperial administration appealed also to troops formed of Huns, Sciri, Sadagari, and Alans in order to defend Scythia. The reorganization of the armed forces by Anastasius I (491–518) led to major changes in their structure, composition, and battle tactics. Later, under Justinian I (527–565), a large part of the attributions of the former border troops were transferred to the armies of the cities, alongside which the field army also took action. The province often had to rely only on its own military resources.⁹

7 Dionisius Exiguus, *Praefatio ad Ioannem et Leontium* 1, in *Scriptores ‘Illyrici’ Minores*, ed. Salvator Genarro, (Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina) 85 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1972), p. 55³⁻⁴.

8 Barnea, “Perioada Dominatului,” pp. 391 and 446–455; Barnea, “La Dobroudja,” pp. 221–252; Zahariade, *Scythia Minor*, pp. 141–157.

9 Barnea, “Perioada Dominatului,” pp. 370–374, 382, 390, and 419–429; Barnea, “La Dobroudja,” pp. 162, 167–171, and 209–221; Zahariade, *Scythia Minor*, pp. 159–191; Michel Pillon, “Armée et défense de l’Illyricum byzantin de Justinien à Héraclius (527–641). De la réorganisation justinienne à l’émergence des « armées de cité »,” *Erytheia* 26 (2005), pp. 7–85.

Being a strategic border province, Scythia had a solid infrastructure (roads and fortifications), and a highway network consisting of three arterial roads and numerous secondary ones (see map 3). One of the main roads was the one on the border, which ran along the Danube bank, coming from Durostorum (now Silistra, Bulgaria) in Moesia Secunda and ending in Stoma Peuce/Ad Stoma (now Dunavățu de Sus, Romania), where the southern branch (Peuce, now Sfântul Gheorghe [Saint George]) of Danube in the Delta flows into the Black Sea. In 527/8, in Hierocles' *Synecdemus*, almost half of the cities in the province are attested along this route: Axiopolis (now Cernavodă, Romania), Capidava (now Capidava-Topalu, Romania), Carsium (now Hârșova, Romania), Troesmis (now Turcoia-Iglița, Romania), Noviodunum (now Isaccea, Romania), Aegyssus (now Tulcea, Romania), and Halmyris (now Murighiol, Romania). The coastal road, the second arterial route, started from Ad Stoma and ran parallel to the Black Sea coast, continuing south to Constantinople. It ensured the land connection between the maritime cities in the province: Constantiana (now Enisala, Romania), Histria, Tomi metropolis, Callatis (now Mangalia, Romania), T(i)rissa/Akres (Kaliakra Cape, Bulgaria), and Dionysopolis (now Balchik, Bulgaria). The third arterial road crossed the central area from north to south, starting from the Danube city of Noviodunum, passing by Tropaeum Traiani (now Adamclisi, Romania) and Zaldapa (now Abrit, Bulgaria) and continuing southwards up to Marcianopolis (now Devnya, Bulgaria), the capital of Moesia Secunda province, and then to Constantinople. From these three highways branched off numerous secondary roads (*semitae*), ensuring the direct connection between the settlements on the Black Sea coast and those of the Danube bank, as well as between all of these and those inside the province. The main demographic areas of Scythia were along the three main roads.¹⁰

Approximately 70 fortified perimeters (*castra, castella, burgi, turres*) were identified on the territory of Scythia. In the 4th century, most of them preserved their military character, but, starting with the following century, many of them became part of the larger inhabited areas, which led to a multiplication of urban centres. At its foundation, there were 11 cities in Scythia, whereas in 527, in *Synecdemus* are mentioned 15, representing 45 per cent of the 32 urban settlements from the Danube provinces of the empire mentioned in the same document. Seven of the cities in Scythia were situated on the Danube River, six on the Black Sea coast, and two inside the province (see above).

10 Barnea, "La Dobroudja," pp. 252–257; Alexandru Barnea, "Voies de communication au Bas-Danube aux IV^e–VI^e s. ap. J.C.," in *Études byzantines et post-byzantines*, 3, eds. Emilian Popescu and Tudor Teoteoi (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1997), pp. 29–35; Zahariade, *Scythia Minor*, pp. 43–49, 141–157, and 138–140.

During the reigns of Justinian I and Justin II (565–578), other fortified settlements were raised to the rank of cities. This aimed at improving the defense system of the province by increasing the military role of urban centres (see above). In what concerns the size of the fortified area of the cities mentioned in *Synecdemus*, only the metropolis of Tomi, having over 60 ha, belonged to the category of large settlements. Five settlements were medium-sized (Zaldapa, Dionysopolis, Noviodunum, Troesmis, and Akres) and eight small (Axiopolis, Histria, Callatis, Carsium, Halmyris, Capidava, Aegyssus, Tropaeum Traiani, and Constantiana).¹¹ The organization and, later, the extension of the episcopal network of Scythia in the 6th century depended directly on this urban network.¹²

The ethnic background of Scythia relied mostly on a strongly Romanized native Getae in the western half of the province and on a Greek speaking population on the Black Sea coast, as well as on freshly colonized Thracians, Dacians, Carpi, as well as communities of Scythians and Sarmatians. In the maritime cities of Tomi and Callatis are also attested inhabitants originating from Syria and Egypt. Many Goths, with the title of foederati, settled in the province in the last quarter of the 4th century. After the collapse of the Hunnic Empire in the middle of the 5th century, groups of Sciri, Sadagari, Alans, and Huns mixed with Sarmatians received lands in the province, and from the second half of the 6th century Slavs are also attested in documents. Before the downfall of the Danubian *limes* (see below), the allogeneous populations settled in Scythia were subjected to an intense romanization process.¹³

11 Hierocles, *Synecdemus* 636.1–8, 637.1–15, 655.1–6, and 657.1–6, in Ernst Honigmann, *Le Synecdémus d'Hiéroklos et l'opuscule géographique de Georges de Chypre: texte, introduction, commentaire et cartes*, (Corpus Bruxellense historiae Byzantinae. Forma imperii Byzantini) 1 (Brussels: Éditions de l'Institut de philologie et d'histoire orientales et slaves, 1939), pp. 13–14 and 20–21; Barnea, “La Dobroudja,” pp. 178–204; Zahariade, *Scythia Minor*, pp. 61–119; Sergeï Torbatov, *Ukrepitel'nata sistema na provinsîiâ Skitiîâ (Kraûa na III–VII v.)* [The Defence System of the Late Roman Province of Scythia (The End of the 3rd–the 7th Century AD)] (Veliko Tarnovo: Faber, 2002), pp. 86–384.

12 See below, chapter 3: ‘The ordinary bishoprics on the territory of the Roman province of Scythia.’

13 Barnea, “Perioada Dominatului,” pp. 402–409 and 432–433; Barnea, “La Dobroudja,” pp. 167–170, 173, 176–177, 184, 192, and 207; Zahariade, *Scythia Minor*, pp. 127–132; Alexandru Barnea, “Aspects ethniques dans la vie rurale de la Dobroudja romaine (Mésie Inférieure),” in *La politique ediltaire dans les provinces de l'Empire romain II^{ème}–IV^{ème} siècles après J.-C.*, ed. Victor H. Baumann (Tulcea: Institutul de Cercetări Eco-Muzeale, 1998), pp. 213–228; Andrei Dorian Soficaru, *Populația provinciei Scythia în perioada romano-bizantină (sf. sec. III–înc. sec. VII)* [The Population of the Province of Scythia during the Early Byzantine Period (The End of the 3rd–the Beginning of the 7th Century AD)] (Iași: Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza,” 2011), pp. 60–66.

The history of Scythia was turbulent, marked by numerous invasions, robberies, and damages caused by the barbarians to the north of the Danube. The first such event took place shortly after its foundation, toward the end of 295 or the beginning of 296, when Carpi, Goths, and Bastarnae attacked the Lower Danube Roman provinces. Goths' attacks occurred in Scythia also under Constantine the Great (306–337) and his successors. During the reign of Valens (364–378), the Goths that had taken refuge south of the Danube revolted, defeated the Roman army in Hadrianopolis (9 August 378) and robbed large regions in the diocese of Thrace, including Scythia. In the last decade of the 4th century and the first two decades of the following century, the province also suffered due to the Huns' attacks. The situation worsened again during the reign of Leo I (457–474). A law issued by his successor, Zeno (474–491), between the years 474 and 484, mentions the precarious situation of the churches in Scythia “damaged by continuous barbarian incursions or otherwise afflicted by want.”¹⁴

Emperors Anastasius I, Justin I (518–527), and Justinian I made important efforts to improve the precarious situation in the Lower Danube regions. In this context, military fortresses were reconstructed and new public edifices were built in Scythia, including basilicas. In the year 513, a riot broke out, led by Vitalian, count of the federates in the diocese of Thrace, in which the armies in Scythia and even the local monks were involved. It was generated by Anastasius I's fiscal policy and religious views. The conflict ended in the year 518, with the emperor's death. During the reign of Justinian I, the barbarian inroads increased in the Lower Danube areas. In *Novella* 50 of 537, Scythia and Moesia Secunda were described as ‘lands infested with barbarians.’¹⁵ The Kutrigurian invasion of 558/9 was devastating for Scythia. In the last quarter of the 6th century and the first quarter of the following century, during the inroads of the Avars and Slavs, most of the cities in the province were destroyed and lost their military character, being gradually deserted by the civil population. Some of the settlements on the sea coast [Tomi, Callatis, Dionysopolis

14 *The Codex of Justinian* 1.3.35.2, in Bruce W. Frier et al., eds., *The Codex of Justinian. A new Annotated Translation, with Parallel Latin and Greek Text*, 1 (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 100–101; Barnea, “Perioada Dominatului,” pp. 374–375, 388–389, and 393–409; Barnea, “La Dobroudja,” pp. 156–170; Zahariade, *Scythia Minor*, pp. 22–30; Liana Oța, “Hunii în Dobrogea” [The Huns in Dobruja], *Istros* x (2000), pp. 363–386; Alexandru Madgearu, “Barbarian Invasions in Northern Scythia Minor during the 4th–5th Centuries B.C.,” *Peuce* [N.S.] 8 (2010), pp. 173–184.

15 *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, 3, ed. Rudolf Schöll (Berlin: Weidmannos, 1912), p. 293^{33–34/31–32}; trans. S.P. Scott (Cincinnati, 1932). Available at https://droitromain.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/Anglica/N50_Scott.htm. Accessed 2022 May 10.

(Balchik-Horizont) and Histria], on the Danube River [Carsium, Aegyssus, Beroe (Piatra Frecăței–Ostrov, Romania)] and inside the province [Ulmetum, possibly (L)Ibida,], even if more modest in occupation, continued their existence after 614. This situation could be prolonged in the case of some of them (Tomi, Carsium, possibly Callatis, Dionysopolis, Histria, Aegyssus) until 680/1, when the Proto-Bulgarians led by Asparuh crossed the river and founded an independent state to the north of the Balkan Mountains. This was the effective end of the former late Roman province of Scythia.¹⁶

In what concerns the penetration of Christianity into the land between the Danube and the Black Sea, it is possible that it occurred in the 1st century, through apostles Andrew and Philip, although there are no unquestionable documentary arguments to support this idea.¹⁷ The discovery in Tomi of an oil lamp with Christian symbols (nine crosses, a dove, a dolphin, and a *planta pedis*) from the second half of the 2nd century or first half of the following one proves the existence of Christians in the city at that time.¹⁸ In the north of the country, on the territory of the present-day Niculițel village (Romania), the carbonized bones of two Christians who suffered martyrdom during the persecution of Decius (249–251) were discovered. Other numerous Christians became martyrs during the persecutions of Diocletian, Licinius (308–324), and Julian (361–363), most of them in Tomi, others in Axiopolis, Halmyris, Noviodunum and, possibly, Dinogetia (now Garvăn, Romania). Their names are mentioned in *Martyrology of Jerome*, *Syriac Martyrology of 411*, *Synaxarion of Constantinople*, and in several epigraphic inscriptions. The entire relics of some of them were found at Niculițel (Sts. Zotikos, Attalos, Kamasis, and

16 Barnea, “Perioada Dominatului,” pp. 409–419 and 429–445; Barnea, “La Dobroudja,” pp. 170–177 and 204–208; Ion Barnea, “Contributions to Dobrudja History under Anastasius I,” *Dacia* 4 (1960), pp. 367–369; Zahariade, *Scythia Minor*, pp. 30–37, 132, and 231–236; Alexandru Madgearu, “The End of the Lower Danubian Limes: A Violent or a Peaceful Process?” *Studia Antiqua et Archaeologica* 12 (2006), pp. 151–168; Torbatov, *Ukrepitelnata sistema*, pp. 115, 154–155, 182, 193, 197, and 269; Gheorghe Mănușu-Adameșteanu, “Tomis-Constantia-Constanța,” *Pontica* XXIV (1991), pp. 299–302 and 324.

17 Pro: Emilian Popescu, “Apostolicitatea creștinismului românesc” [The Apostolicity of the Romanian Christianity], in *Sfântul Apostol Andrei, ocrotitorul României, înepătorul Botezului în poporul român*, ed. Sebastian-Laurențiu Nazârău (Bucharest: Cuvântul Vieții, 2011), pp. 147–163; Virgil Lungu, “The Christian Scythia,” in Zahariade, *Scythia Minor*, pp. 195–196 and 208. Contra: Nelu Zugravu, “Studiu introductiv, notițe bibliografice, note și comentarii” [Introductory Study, Biobibliographical Notes, Footnotes, and Comments], in Nelu Zugravu, ed., *Fontes Historiae Daco-Romanae Christianitatis* (Iași: Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza,” 2008), pp. 18–65.

18 Constantin Băjenaru, “Un opaiț cu simboluri paleocreștine descoperit la Tomis” [An Oil Lamp with Early Christian Symbols Discovered in Tomi], *Pontica* 35–36 (2002–2003), pp. 217–223.

Philippos), Halmyris (Sts. Epictet and Astion), Tropaeum Traiani (five martyrs not known by their names, in the crypt of the 'A' basilica), and Beroe (other martyrs not known by their names), whereas in the crypt of the basilica in Sanctus Cyrillus fortress [on the territory of now Kapitan Dimitrovo village (Bulgaria), close to the modern Golesh village (Bulgaria)], three fragments of relics were discovered. The bones of several people were also found in the crypt of the cemeterial basilica of Tropaeum Traiani. The relics of at least three martyrs (Sts. Cyrillus, Kyndaeas, and Tasius) were preserved in Axiopolis at the beginning of the 4th century. Their existence there is attested by an inscription engraved on a limestone slab uncovered among the remains of the local extramural basilica. Other crypts of basilicas in Tomi (four), Zaldapa (four), Tropaeum Traiani (two), Histria (two), and Capidava (one) were discovered empty. The relics preserved inside them were most probably evacuated from the province in the context of the barbarian attacks that occurred by the turn of the 7th century.¹⁹

To date, the remains of over 60 worship places (urban intramural and extramural basilicas, rural basilicas, martyria, and monastic chapels) have been discovered on the territory of Scythia. Among the oldest ones are the first basilicas of the monastic complexes near Slava Rusă (Romania) and Dumbrăveni (Romania), dated to the second half of the 4th century. A special case is represented by the basilica in Telița-Amza (Romania), dated to the beginning of the 4th century, which served a Christian community from the countryside, being shaped by adapting an edifice from the 2nd–3rd centuries to the Christian worship. The sanctuary of Niculițel, where the relics of six Christian martyrs were discovered (see above), was situated in the administrative territory (*chora*) of

19 Lungu, "The Christian Scythia," pp. 201–203; Georgi Atanasov, "Le martyrium, la basilique et le confessio avec des reliques dans le castel bas-byzantin près du village de Goleche, région de Silistra (Durostorum)," *Acta Musei Varnaensis* 4 (2006), pp. 199–236; Georgi Atanasov, "Christianity along the Lower Danube Limes in the Roman Provinces of *Dacia Ripensis*, *Moesia Secunda* and *Scythia Minor* (4th–6th c. AD)," in *The Lower Danube Roman Limes (1st–6th C. AD)*, eds. Lyudmil Vagalinski, Nikolay Sharankov, and Sergey Torbatov (Sofia: NIAM-BAS, 2012), pp. 327–335, 341–343, and 365–373; Victor H. Baumann, *Sângele martirilor* [The Blood of the Martyrs] (Constanța: Dobrogea, 2015); Georgi Atanasov, Ioto Valeriev, and Valeri Yotov, "The Crypt in the Sanctuary of the Basilica No 3 at the Ancient City of Zaldapa (Province of Scythia)," *Niš i Vizantija/Niš & Byzantium* 15 (2017), pp. 123–132; Alexandru Madgearu, "Martyrs from the Danubian Limes during the Reign of Galerius," in *Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference History and Theology, Constanța (Romania), November 17–18, 2020*, ed. Ionuț Holubeanu (Bucharest: Editura Universitară, 2021), pp. 55–68; Aurelian Petre, "La romanité en Scythie Mineure (II-e–VII-e siècles avant notre ère)—Recherches archéologiques," *Association Internationale d'Études du Sud-Est Européen. Bulletin* 17–18 (1987), pp. 104–106.

Noviodunum and built in the second half of the 4th century. The large number of basilicas, the old age of some of them, and their existence in the countryside reveals the early spread of Christianity in Scythia.²⁰

The first hierarch of Tomi known by name is Saint Cyrillus, martyred in Axiopolis in the year 303 or 304. Most probably, he presided the Christian communities in the land between the Danube and the Black Sea when the province of Scythia was founded and the atypical organization of the Church there (only one bishop, that of Tomi, for the whole province) could be put to his account.²¹ His successor was Evangelicus (c.304), mentioned in *Passion* of the Holy Martyrs Epictet and Astion.²² Another bishop of Tomi, (Ani)Filius/Titus, mentioned in *Martyrology of Jerome* was martyred during Licinius' persecution.²³

The Church of Scythia may have been represented at the First Council of Nicaea (325) by Mark, who was mentioned in the signatories lists of the council as 'Marcus Comeensis/Tomeensis.'²⁴ During the theological debates of the 4th century, which followed the Nicaean council, the Church in Scythia remained loyal to the Orthodox faith. This aspect is shown by Sozomen in his *Church History*, pointing to the defense of the Nicene doctrine of the Trinity by Saint Vetranio/Bretanio (c.367–c.374) of Tomi in front of the Semi-Arian Emperor Valens, in 369.²⁵ A decade later, at the First Council of Constantinople

20 Lungu, "The Christian Scythia," pp. 209–218; Virgil Lungu, *Creștinismul în Scythia Minor în contextul vest-pontic* [The Christianity in Scythia Minor in the West-Pontic Context] (Sibiu/Constanța: T.C. Sen, 2000), pp. 59–77; Victor H. Baumann, "Paleochristian Churches in Roman Rural Environment," *Studia Antiqua et Archaeologica* 12 (2006), pp. 119–133; Ioan Iațcu, *Construcții religioase creștine în provincia Scythia: secolele IV–VI p.Chr.* [Christian Religious Constructions in the Province of Scythia: The 4th–6th Centuries AD] (Brăila: Istros, 2012), pp. 44–103.

21 Ionuț Holubeanu, "The Holy Martyr Cyrillus of Axiopolis," in *History and Tradition. To the Memory of Emilian Popescu (February 20, 1928–August 25, 2020)*, ed. Ionuț Holubeanu (Bucharest: Editura Universitară, 2023), pp. 71–108.

22 *De ss. Epicteto presb. et Astione monacho, martyribus almiridensibus in Scythia* III.26, in *Acta Sanctorum Julii*, 2, eds. Conrado Janningo, Joannes Baptista Sollerio, and Joannes Pinio (Antwerp: Apud Iacobum du Moulin, 1721), p. 546.

23 *Martyrologium Hieronymianum* III Non. Ian., in *Acta Sanctorum Novembris*, II/1, eds. Giovanni Battista de Rossi and Louis Duchesne (Brussels: Socii Bollandiani, 1894), p. [5].

24 Ionuț Holubeanu, "Dependența canonică a Tomisului în secolul al IV-lea" [The Ecclesiastical Subordination of the Bishopric of Tomi in the 4th Century AD], in *Cruce și misiune. Sfinții Împărați Constantin și Elena—promotori ai libertății religioase și apărători ai Bisericii*, 2, eds. Emilian Popescu and Viorel Ioniță (Bucharest: Basilica, 2013), pp. 624–637. Contra: Zugravu, "Studiu introductiv," pp. 71–74.

25 Sozomenos, *Historia ecclesiastica* VI.21.2–6, in *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Christian Hansen Günther, (Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller) 4 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995), pp. 263¹⁶–264⁸; trans. Chester D. Hartranft, (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers) II/2 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1979), pp. 799–800.

(381), Scythia was represented by Terennius/Terentius/Gerontius of Tomi (c.381), who is one of the eleven hierarchs nominated by Emperor Theodosius I (379–395) as landmarks for the Orthodox faith in the eastern part of the Roman Empire.²⁶ His successor, Theotimus I (c.390–c.407), was a hesychast monk, writer, and missionary, who had the reputation of a wonder-worker and was honored as a saint in the Catholic Church shortly after his death.²⁷

Five other hierarchs of Tomi are known in the 5th century: Timothy (c.431), Alexander (c.449–c.452), Theotimus II (c.457/458), and Peter (c.480–498). Timothy was a contemporary of the theological debates generated by the teaching of Archbishop Nestorius of Constantinople (428–431). Unlike his predecessors in Tomi, who were firm defenders of the Orthodox faith, Timothy was hesitant. Moreover, the measures he took in Scythia after the First Council of Ephesus (431) affected the soteriological teaching of the Church in the province in the long run.²⁸ Alexander attended the hearing in Constantinople on 13 April 449 and approved the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon (451), after the end of its sessions.²⁹ Theotimus II is known to have been leading the Church in Scythia during the religious investigation initiated by Emperor Leo I in 457. In his response letter to the emperor, the hierarch of Tomi proved to be favorable to the council's decisions of 451 and condemned the murder of the Chalcedonian Patriarch Proterius (†457) at Alexandria.³⁰ Peter of Tomi was the tutor of Saint Dionysius Exiguus.³¹

The last three metropolitans of Tomi in Late Antiquity known by their names are Paternus (498–c.520), John (c.530–c.550), and Valentinian (c.550).

26 *Codex Theodosianus* XVI.1.3, in *Theodosiani libri XVI cum constitutionibus Sirmondianis et Leges Novellae ad Theodosianum pertinentes*, 1/2, eds. Theodor Mommsen and Paul Martin Meyer (Berlin: Königlich Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1905), p. 834¹⁻¹⁷; trans. Clyde Pharr, Theresa Sherrer Davidson, and Mary Brown Pharr, *The Corpus of Roman Law (Corpus Juris Romani). A Translation, with Commentary, of All the Source Material of Roman Law*, 1 (*The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions*) (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1952), p. 440.

27 See below, subchapter 11.4: 'Saint Theotimus I of Tomi (c.390–c.407).'

28 See below, subchapter 12.3.4: 'The doctrine of salvation of the Scythian monks.'

29 Jacques Zeiller, *Les origines chrétiennes dans les provinces danubiennes de l'empire romain* (Paris: De Boccard, 1918), p. 173; Vitalien Laurent, "Note d'histoire ecclésiastique: La Scythie mineure fut-elle représentée au Concile de Chalcédoine?" *Études byzantines* 3 (1945), pp. 115–123; Nicolae Șerbănescu, "1600 de ani de la prima mărturie documentară despre existența Episcopiei Tomisului" [1600 Years since the First Documentary Attestation of the Bishopric of Tomi], *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 87 (1969), nos. 9–10, pp. 1016–1017.

30 *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, 11/5, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1936), p. 31, and also below subchapter 2.2.2: 'The *Encyclia* (457–458) of emperor Leo I.'

31 See below, subchapter 12.2.2: 'The Preface to the Latin translation of the Synodal Letter (no. 17) to Nestorius.'

Paternus' name is mentioned in an inscription engraved on a silver liturgical plate in 498 and in a letter of the papal legates in Constantinople on 5 July 519 regarding the Christological debates in which the Scythian monks at that time were involved. He also participated in the Home Synod of July 520, within which Epiphanius (520–535) was elected patriarch of Constantinople.³² John, coming from among the Scythian monks, wrote a treatise against Eutychianism and Nestorianism.³³ Regarding Valentinian, he corresponded with Pope Vigilius (537–555) during the Three Chapters controversy; his name was also mentioned in the documents of the Second Council of Constantinople (553).³⁴

The first ordinary bishoprics, suffragan of the metropolis of Tomi, were founded on the territory of Roman Scythia in the second quarter of the 6th century (c.536).³⁵ Even if they were numerous, the name of only one hierarch (Stephen) is known at present. He is mentioned in an epigraphic inscription at Callatis.³⁶

A Novatian bishop, named Mark, is attested in documents in Scythia in 438.³⁷ His existence reveals the quite large number of Christians in Scythia who renounced their faith under the persecutions of Diocletian and Licinius from the first quarter of the 4th century and the discontent of some of the local Christians with the readmission of these *lapsi* to communion. Socrates names Mark as “bishop of the Novatians in Scythia” (“ἐν Σκυθίᾳ Νουατιανῶν ἐπίσκοπος”). From these words it can be deduced that the Novatian communities in the province were led by a single bishop (like the Catholic ones). Most likely, this bishop also resided at Tomi, the Novatian hierarchy in the empire as a rule duplicated the Catholic presence.

The Church of Scythia had relations also with other churches in the East and the West, through the hierarchs, priests, deacons, monks, and even the ordinary Christians. Old ecclesiastical connections with the Syro-Palestinian provinces are suggested by a hagiographical document (*Lives of the Bishops of*

32 Zeiller, *Les origines*, pp. 173 and 383–384; Șerbănescu, “1600 de ani,” pp. 1019–1022; Alexandru Madgearu, “The Plate of Paternus from the Malaja Perešćepina Treasure: Booty or Gift?” in *Études byzantines et post-byzantines*, 6, eds. Emilian Popescu and Tudor Teoteoi (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2011), pp. 65–71.

33 See below, subchapter 12.3.2: “Textual sources about the Scythian monks.”

34 See below, chapter 4: “Valentinianus episcopus Scythiae.”

35 See below, chapter 3: “The ordinary bishoprics on the territory of the Roman province of Scythia.”

36 Ion Barnea, *Christian Art in Romania*, 1 (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1979), pl. 33, pp. 102–103.

37 Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* VII.46.10, in *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Christian Hansen Günther, (Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller) 1 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995), p. 394²⁻³; trans. Chester D. Hartranft, (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers) 11/2 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 448.

Chersonesus), which mentions the sending of a bishop (Ephraim) to Scythia by Hermon of Jerusalem (300–312).³⁸ The relations between the bishops of Tomi and those of Syria were also proposed on the basis of some type of amphoras (LRA 1 with Christian inscriptions) discovered in Scythia.³⁹ The architecture of two Scythian basilicas [that in Callatis (4th–5th centuries) and one (no. 3) in Troesmis (6th century)] reflects Syrian influences.⁴⁰ These connections may have been mediated by the Syrian community in Scythia, whose existence is epigraphically attested: Simplicius the Syrian, a lawyer, is referred to in a funerary inscription in Callatis (5th–6th centuries), and Paul the Syrian, a subdeacon, in a funerary inscription in Tomi (6th century).⁴¹

Some Christians from the eastern provinces of the empire settled in Scythia, like Epictet and Astion, martyred at Halmyris in 304.⁴² Others were exiled there, like Macrobius (from Phrygia) and Gordian (from Cappadocia), who were martyred in Tomi in 320–324.⁴³ Under Constantius II (337–361), Audius the monk, the founder of the schismatic group that bears his name, was also exiled in Scythia.⁴⁴ Other Christians (such as a certain Cappadocian Euty chius, in the

38 Ionuț Holubeanu, “On the Missionary Area of the Holy Martyr-Bishop Ephraim,” in *Études byzantines et post-byzantines*, 6, eds. Emilian Popescu and Tudor Teoteoi (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2011), pp. 7–21. See also Andrei Țu. Vinogradov, «*Minovala uzhe zima tazycheskogo bezumiâ ...» Tserkov' i tserkvi Hersona v IV veke po dannym literaturnyh istochnikov i epigrafiki* [«The Winter of Pagan Madness Has Already Passed ...» The Church and Churches of Chersonesus in the 4th Century according to Literary Sources and Epigraphy] (Moscow: Universitet Dmitriiâ Pozharskogo, 2010), pp. 20–24, 39–40, 42, 49–51, 55, 63–64, and 155–156.

39 Andrei Opaț, *Local and Imported Ceramics in the Roman Province of Scythia (4th–6th Centuries AD). Aspects of Economic Life in the Province of Scythia*, (BAR International Series) 1274 (Oxford: BAR Publishing, 2004), p. 104.

40 Ion Barnea, “Relațiile provinciei Scythia Minor cu Asia Mică, Siria și Egiptul” [The Relations of the Province of Scythia Minor with Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt], *Pontica* 5 (1972), p. 257; Iațcu, *Construcții*, p. 37.

41 Barnea, “Relațiile provinciei Scythia Minor,” pp. 255–257; Emilian Popescu, *Inscripțiile grecești și latine din secolele IV–XIII descoperite în România* [The Greek and Latin Inscriptions from the 4th to 13th Centuries Discovered in Romania] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1976), pp. 84–85 (no. 48) and 138–139 (no. 92). On the early connections of Scythia Minor with Roman Syria (2nd–3rd centuries AD), see Iulian Bîrzescu and Adam Rabinowitz, “The Rock-Cut Inscriptions from Casian and Their Context,” *Dacia* [N.S.] 24 (1980), pp. 146–148.

42 See below, chapter 9: ‘Primitive Ascetism in Roman Scythia.’

43 *Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae* Sept. 13, no. 2, in Hippolyte Delehay, *Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae e Codice Sirmondiano nunc Berolinensi*, (Acta Sanctorum. Propylaeum ad Acta Sanctorum Novembris) (Brussels: Apud Socios Bollandianos, 1902), pp. 40⁷–41⁷.

44 See below, chapter 10: ‘The Audians.’

second quarter of the 4th century) came to the Lower Danube regions (including Scythia) from the eastern regions of the empire to preach the Christian faith.⁴⁵

In 373, Vetrano of Tomi bore a correspondence with Saint Basil the Great on the occasion of the transfer from trans-Danubian Gothia to Cappadocia of the relics of Saint Sabas the martyr (†12 April 372).⁴⁶ Theotimus I of Tomi was close to John Chrysostom, whom he defended against the accusation of Origenism.⁴⁷ Other hierarchs of Tomi, as already shown, participated in ecumenical councils, in home synods, and were involved in the theological debates that took place during their spiritual guidance.

In the first quarter of the 6th century, the monks in Scythia travelled to Constantinople, Rome, and the island of Sardinia to advocate for the adoption of their theanthropaschite theological formula “One of the Holy Trinity suffered/was crucified in the flesh” (“*unus de sancta trinitate passus/crucifixus est carne*”).⁴⁸

The travels of Saints John Cassian and Germanus reveal the Scythian Christians’ pilgrimages to Palestine since the end of the 4th century. Another Christian from Roman Scythia, Benjamin, is attested in Scetis desert in Egypt at the same time.⁴⁹

Menas flasks from Egypt were discovered in Tomi (three pieces) and Capidava (one piece) (5th–6th centuries). Two other pilgrim flasks, one from the Syro-Palestinian provinces (6th century) and one from Asia Minor (the end of the 6th century), were discovered in Capidava and Callatis, respectively.⁵⁰ They could have been brought either by pilgrims or by merchants and soldiers,

45 See below, chapter 9: ‘Primitive ascetism in Roman Scythia.’

46 See below, subchapter 11.3: ‘Saint Vetrano of Tomi (c.367–c.374).’

47 See below, subchapter 11.4: ‘Saint Theotimus I of Tomi (c.390–c.407).’

48 See below, subchapter 12.3: ‘The Scythian monks.’

49 See below, subchapter 11.1: ‘Scythian monasticism in the time of John Cassian.’

50 On the Menas flasks in Tomi, see: Barnea, *Christian Art*, pl. 101, pp. 238–239; Ion Barnea, “Menasampullen auf dem Gebiet Rumäniens,” in *Akten des XII Internationalen Kongresses für Christliche Archäologie, Bonn, 22–28 September, 1991*, 1, ed. Ernst Dassmann (Münster: Aschendorff, 1995), pp. 509–511; Opaïț, *Local and Imported Ceramics*, p. 82. On the pilgrim flasks in Capidava, see: Ioan I.C. Opriș, *Ceramica romană târzie și paleobizantină de la Capidava în contextul descoperirilor de la Dunărea de Jos (sec. IV–VI p.Chr.)* [Late Roman and Early Byzantine Pottery from Capidava and Its Lower Danube Context (4th–6th Centuries)] (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2003), pp. 158–162; Opaïț, *Local and Imported Ceramics*, pp. 82–83. On the pilgrim flask in Callatis, see: Mihai Ionescu and Ioan I.C. Opriș, “O ampulla din Asia Minor recent descoperită la Callatis” [An Ampulla from Asia Minor Recently Discovered at Callatis], *Thraco-Dacica* 19 (1998), nos. 1–2, pp. 167–169; Opriș, *Ceramica romană*, pp. 160–161; Opaïț, *Local and Imported Ceramics*, pp. 82–83.

or could be the result of elite-level gift-exchange.⁵¹ An inscription at Bizone (now Kavarna, in Bulgaria) (6th century) mentions the erection there (by voluntary donations—*de donis*) of a basilica dedicated to the martyrs Cosmas and Damian, whose shrine was in the city of Cyrrhus, in Syria.⁵² All these pieces of evidence reveal the veneration in Scythia of the saints from those regions and suggest the connections with their sacred sites.

The liturgical language of the Church in Roman Scythia was Greek. A piece of evidence in this respect is the Christian inscriptions written in this language identified in the Latin-speaking areas of the province (on the Danube River and in the central part). The most representative are those from the basilicas in Axiopolis, Halmyris, and Niculițel. In the first case (Axiopolis, on the Danube), there is an inscription dated to the early half of the 4th century, where the names of three of the local martyrs (Cyrillus, Kyndaeas, and Tasius) are mentioned.⁵³ In Halmyris, a city situated close to the point where the Danube flows into the Black Sea, the inscription in the crypt of the intramural basilica (the second quarter of the 4th century) is written also in Greek, mentioning the names of the two local martyrs (Epictet and Astion).⁵⁴ At Niculițel, in *chora* of the Danubian city of Noviodunum, there are three inscriptions in Greek in the crypt of the basilica (the latter half of the 4th century).⁵⁵ A special case is represented by a bilingual (Greek and Latin) Christian inscription of the 5th–6th centuries, uncovered in Tropaeum Traiani, a city situated in the central Latin-speaking area of the province.⁵⁶ In the following century (the 6th), Greek is attested as a liturgical language of the Scythian monks, who mention that the Liturgy of Basil the Great was used almost throughout the whole East (so also in Roman Scythia) and cite (in Latin translation) a version of the *Prayer*

51 William Anderson, “An Archaeology of Late Antique Pilgrim Flasks,” *Anatolian Studies* 54 (2004), pp. 79–93; William Anderson, “Menas Flasks in the West: Pilgrimage and Trade at the End of Antiquity,” *Ancient West and East* 6 (2007), pp. 221–243.

52 Iațcu, *Construcții*, pp. 50–51.

53 Barnea, *Christian Art*, pl. 4/1, pp. 44–45: “Κυρίλλω/Κυνδαία/Τασείω π/αρατίθωμ/αι Εὐφράσιν” (“Close by [martyrs] Cyrillus, Kyndaeas, and Tasius I bury Euphrasi[o]s”).

54 Mihail Zahariade, “The Episcopal Basilica from Halmyris and the Crypt of Epictetus and Astion,” *Thraco-Dacica* 1 (24) (2009), nos. 1–2, p. 145: “ΜΑΡ[ΤΥ]C [ΧΡΙCΤΟΥ] / ΜΑΡΤ[ΥC] ΧΡ[ΙCΤΟΥ] / [...] ΑΝ [...] / ΒΟ[Η ΘΙ? ...] / ΑΙΡ [...] ΑCΤΙΟ/Ν ΟΙC ΚΟ[...]Ω / ΥΒΡΙ[ΖΑ?]ΝΤΙΑ.”

55 Barnea, *Christian Art*, pl. 3, pp. 42–43: “Μάρτυρες Χριστοῦ” (“Christ’s Martyrs”); “Μάρτυρες Ζώτικος, Ἀτταλος, Καμάσις, Φίλιππος” (“Martyrs Zotikos, Attalos, Kamasis, Philippos”); “ὧδε κε ὧδε ἰχώρ μαρτύρων” (“Here and there [is] the martyrs’ blood”).

56 Barnea, *Christian Art*, pl. 39, pp. 114–115: “†Σταυρός [θανάτου και] / ἀναστά[σεως] / † Crux mort[is et] / ressurect[ionis]” (“The cross of death and resurrection”).

to the *Altar* in this religious ceremony.⁵⁷ Greek is also attested in theological education in the province by the turn of the 5th century, during the time of Theotimus I of Tomi.⁵⁸ Later, after the First Council of Ephesus (431), the use of Latin became widespread in theological education. In 492, Metropolitan Peter of Tomi asked Dionysius Exiguus, who was in Rome, to translate for him the Synodal Letter (no. 17) to Nestorius from Greek to Latin. A similar request was addressed to Dionysius in 519 by some of the Scythian monks who arrived in Rome. These requests reveal that most of the theologians of the province no longer understood at a satisfactory level the Greek of the theological treatises. Scythian monks also wrote their treatises and compiled the patristic texts collections in Latin, not in Greek.⁵⁹

As can be seen, there is a diversity of topics related to Christianity in Scythia. Some of them, such as archaeological discoveries (basilicas, inscriptions, and other remains), made the object of numerous studies and extended works. Mention must be made of the book of the Romanian researcher Ioan Iațcu, which was dedicated to Christian religious constructions discovered on the territory of Scythia.⁶⁰ We consider it useful to edit a new extended work, presenting together Christian objects discovered in the province, with a re-evaluation of their dating.⁶¹ Significant progress was also made in clarifying the series of Christian hierarchs in the province, the problematic cases—Peter and John of Tomi—being discussed in the present book, as well.⁶²

In the case of other topics, such as the origins of Christian life in the province, the identification of the martyrs there, or of the relations with other churches, there are aspects that have not been fully clarified, even if the subjects have been approached by certain scholars.⁶³ Moreover, no Christian

57 Petrus Diaconus et al., *Epistula ad episcopos*, in *Maxentii aliorumque scytharum monachorum necnon Ioannis Tomitanae urbis episcopi opuscula*, ed. François Glorie, (Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina) 85A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1978), p. 170³⁰⁷⁻³¹²; Fulgentius Ruspensis et al., *Epistula xvii*, in Fulgentius Ruspensis, *Opera*, ed. Jean Fraipont, (Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina) 91A (Turnhout: Brepols 1972), pp. 38–39.

58 See below, subchapter 11.4: 'Saint Theotimus I of Tomi (c.390–c.407).'

59 See below, subchapters 12.2: 'Dionysius Exiguus,' and 12.3: 'The Scythian monks.'

60 Iațcu, *Construcții* (see above, n. 20).

61 The best known work of this type belongs to Ion Barnea, *Christian Art in Romania*, 2 vols. (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1979). Nevertheless, many important discoveries have been made since that moment, published in various studies.

62 On the hierarchs in Scythia, see above, pp. 9–12 (the paragraphs with n. 21–38). On Peter of Tomi, see below, subchapter 12.2.2: 'The Preface to the Latin translation of the Synodal Letter (no. 17) to Nestorius.' On John of Tomi, see below, subchapter 12.3.2: 'Textual sources about the Scythian monks.'

63 On the beginning of Christianity in Scythia Minor, see above, p. 7 (n. 17). On the Christian martyrs of Scythia, the most recent studies are those of Alexandru Madgearu ['Martyrs

prosopography of Scythia has been written, even if there had been preoccupations in this regard.⁶⁴

In the present book, two topics regarding the history of Christianity in Roman Scythia are treated: Church organization and monastic life. We have paid particular attention to these issues in our previous research investigations.⁶⁵ To clarify several aspects related to these topics, we have advanced a new thesis, based on documentary information that was overlooked or (we consider) not satisfactorily interpreted in the already published works.

We hope to deal extensively also with other topics, such as the Christian martyrs of Scythia, in our future studies.

from the Danubian Limes" (see above, n. 19), pp. 55–68] and Ionuț Holubeanu ["The Holy Martyr Cyrillus of Axiopolis" (see above, n. 21)]. On the relations of the Church of Scythia with other Churches, see Nelu Zugravu, "*Itineraria Ecclesiastica nella Scythia Minor, Classica et Christiana* 5 (2010), no. 1, pp. 227–269.

64 Nelu Zugravu, "Pour une prosopographie chretienne du Bas-Danube (III^e–VII^e siecles)," *Peuce* [N.S.] 11 (2013), pp. 291–306; Dominic Moreau, "Les moines scythes néo-chalcédoniens (de Zaldapa?). Étude préliminaire à une prosopographie chrétienne du Diocèse des Thraces," *Dobrudzha* 32 (2017), pp. 187–202.

65 See Ionuț Holubeanu, *Organizarea bisericească în Scythia și Moesia Secunda în secolele IV–VII* [The Ecclesiastical Organization in Scythia and Moesia Secunda in the 4th–7th Centuries] (Bucharest: Basilica, 2018); Ionuț Holubeanu, *Monahismul în Dobrogea de la origini până în zilele noastre* [The Monasticism in Dobruja from the Origins to the Present] (Bucharest: Editura Universitară, 2020).

PART 1

*Evolution of the Ecclesiastical Organization of
Scythia (4th–7th Centuries AD)*



Scholarly Views on the Evolution of the Ecclesiastical Organization of Roman Scythia

The ecclesiastical organization of Roman Scythia had been atypical. The hierarch of Tomi (now Constanța, Romania) had under his direct jurisdiction the Christian communities on the territory of the whole province. This situation, explicitly mentioned by Sozomen in his *Church History* (VI.21.3, VII.26.6), and by a law issued between the years 474 and 484 by Emperor Zeno (476–491) (*Codex Iustinianus*, I.3.35.2), raised several questions regarding the rank of the see of Tomi, the way in which hierarchs were elected there, and their canonical dependence. The topic became even more complex due to the identification of new documentary information that revealed a situation different from the one mentioned by Sozomen and the text of Zeno's law.

In what follows, the main scholarly opinions on this topic are exposed, emphasizing the way in which their viewpoints evolved due to the identification of new documentary information. For a better understanding of the impact that each scholar's study had on the academic milieu, the presentation is chronological, depending on the moment of publication.

Michel Le Quien was the first to refer to the church organization in Roman Scythia. Based on Sozomen's statement (*Hist.eccl.* VI.21), he sustained the existence in the province only of the see of Tomi, attributing it the rank of metropolis.¹ Le Quien also mentioned an episcopal centre in Axiopolis (now Cernavodă, Romania), but dated its activity in the period prior to the foundation of the Roman province of Scythia, attributing it to Moesia Inferior.²

Johann Elieser Theodor Wiltsch also affirmed the permanent existence in Scythia only of the see of Tomi. He admitted the existence of an ecclesiastical province of Scythia, but included the see of Tomi in the category of bishoprics, stating that it did not depend on any metropolis within the church organizational plan.³ This would mean that the principles specific to the metropolitan organization system were not applied in the province.

1 Michael Le Quien, *Oriens christianus*, 1 (Paris: Ex typographia regia, 1740), col. 1211–1212.

2 Le Quien, *Oriens christianus*, col. 1231–1232.

3 Johann Elieser Theodor Wiltsch, *Handbuch der kirchlichen Geographie und Statistik von den Zeiten der Apostel bis zu dem Anfange des sechzehnten Jahrhunderts: mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die Ausbreitung des Judenthums und Mohammedanismus*, 1 (Berlin: Schultze, 1846), p. 174; trans. John Leitch (London: Bosworth & Harrison, 1859), pp. 184–185.

After almost half a century, Heinrich Gelzer, professor of classical philology and ancient history at the University of Jena (Germany) at that time, published an extended article dedicated to *Notitiae episcopatum* of the Church of Constantinople that were known at that time. Based on the information presented in the old *Notitiae* (Παλαιά Τακτικά), Sozomen (VI.21), Zeno's law and *Encyclia* (457–458),⁴ Gelzer stated that the see of Tomi had the rank of an autocephalous archbishopric.⁵

In 1891, Carl de Boor, former student of Theodor Mommsen and (at that time) a librarian at the University Library in Breslau (now Wrocław, Poland), published a new *Notitia episcopatum* of the Church in Constantinople (MS Parisinus 1555A; *Notitia* 3 in the edition of Jean Darrouzès), where the see of Tomi is registered as a metropolis of the ecclesiastical province of Scythia, with 14 suffragan bishoprics.⁶ De Boor did not comment on this information, but only pointed to the important differences that extended between the content of the new *Notitia* and that of the already known ones.⁷

The first study dedicated to *Notitia* 3 was published in the year 1892 by Heinrich Gelzer. The German scholar stated that for writing the second part of the document, which presents the internal structure of every ecclesiastical province (including Scythia), the author also used information prior to the Slavs' settlement in the Balkan Peninsula. He admitted the possibility that the information on the southern Balkan provinces may reflect the situation at the time of Justinian I (527–565) and immediately after his reign.⁸

Most of Gelzer's conclusions were rejected three years later by Louis Duchesne. At that moment, the French scholar was at the top of his scientific career, occupying the position of director of the *École française* in Rome. Of Duchesne's conclusions, important for the present analysis is the one stating that in the rubric for Scythia (as in those dedicated to the Greek provinces south of the Balkan Peninsula) the cities of the province are listed and not

4 The information exposed in these documents will be extensively presented and analyzed in chapter 2: 'The see of Tomi in the period between the 4th and the 7th centuries AD.'

5 Heinrich Gelzer, "Zur Zeitbestimmung der griechischen Notitiae Episcopatum," *Jahrbücher für protestantische Theologie* 12 (1886), no. 3, pp. 341–342.

6 Carl de Boor, "Nachträge zu den Notitiae episcopatum (II)," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 12 (1891), nos. 3–4, pp. 532–533 (nos. 679–693); Jean Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae: Texte critique, introduction et notes*, (Géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire Byzantin) 1 (Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 1981), 3.40.642–656, p. 242. The numbering of Jean Darrouzès' edition for *Notitiae episcopatum* was used in the content of the present book.

7 De Boor, "Nachträge (II)," p. 519.

8 Heinrich Gelzer, "Die kirchliche Geographie Griechenlands vor dem Slaveneinbruche," *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie* 35 (1892), no. 4, pp. 424–434.

the suffragan bishoprics. Duchesne based his assertion on the data exposed in Παλαιά Τακτικά, Hierocles' *Synecdemus*, *Encyclia*, and Zeno's law. From his point of view, the situation of the church organization in Scythia remained unchanged throughout the whole existence of the province.⁹

After the publication of this study, Carl de Boor and Heinrich Gelzer did not publish anything regarding *Notitia* 3. The latter's silence was motivated by the acceptance of Duchesne's conclusions. In a letter Gelzer addressed to Raymund Netzhammer in 1902–1903, he admitted that in the paragraph on Scythia of *Notitia* 3, a fragment of a civil list is reproduced.¹⁰

In 1900, Karl Georg Brandis, research assistant at Royal Library (Königliche Bibliothek) in Berlin, published an article dedicated to the city of Constantiana (now Enisala, Romania) in Scythia. Based on the information exposed in *Notitia* 3, Brandis admitted the status of episcopal residence of this settlement. His interpretation seems to have been a totally independent one, as he made no reference to the studies of Gelzer and Duchesne.¹¹

Three years later, Raymund Netzhammer published his first book dedicated to Christian antiquities in Dobruja, prepared, most probably, in the period when he was director of the Roman Catholic Holy Spirit Seminary in Bucharest (Romania). He rejected Brandis' opinion regarding the existence of a bishopric in Constantiana, stating that only the see of Tomi functioned in Scythia. Netzhammer's opinion was determined by the positive references to Louis Duchesne's conclusions that he received from Heinrich Gelzer.¹²

However, with the initial archaeological excavations conducted on the territory of the former province of Scythia, serious doubt emerged about the existence of only one bishopric there. Gustav von Cube, an architect in charge with the design of the edifices discovered at Tropaeum Traiani (now Adamclisi, Romania) was impressed by the size of basilica 'B' (also called „marble basilica”) discovered in 1906 in the city. He consulted Raymund Netzhammer (become Roman-Catholic archbishop of Bucharest and considered by Von Cube an authority on the history of Christianity in the Dobruja) if Tropaeum Traiani could have possibly been an episcopal see. Netzhammer excluded that possibility, given that the written sources attest only to one bishopric in Scythia,

9 Louis Duchesne, "Les anciens évêchés de la Grèce," *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 15 (1895), pp. 375–385.

10 See Raymund Netzhammer, *Das altchristliche Tomi: eine kirchengeschichtliche Studie* (Salzburg: Markl, 1903), p. 19; Raymund Netzhammer, *Die christlichen Altertümer der Dobrudscha* (Bucharest: SOCEC & Co., 1918), p. 38.

11 Karl-Georg Brandis, "Constantiana," in *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen altertumswissenschaft*, 7, ed. Georg Wissowa (Stuttgart: Metzlerscher, 1900), col. 959–960.

12 Netzhammer, *Das altchristliche Tomi*, pp. 14–20.

namely that of Tomi.¹³ Shortly after their dialogue, Netzhammer published a study dedicated to the city of Tropaeum Traiani, in which he stated that this city had permanently been under the direct jurisdiction of the see of Tomi.¹⁴

Meanwhile, a baptistery was found near 'B' basilica in Tropaeum Traiani. Upon learning about the discovery, Netzhammer retracted his earlier analysis and admitted that a bishopric may have existed there. According to his new interpretation, after the city of Tomi was destroyed by the Slavs and/or Avars in the late 6th or early 7th century, the episcopal see of the province moved to Tropaeum Traiani.¹⁵

Five years after the discovery of the Tropaeum baptistery, in 1911, two other studies appeared, which approached the topic of church organization in Scythia, authored by Vasile Pârvan¹⁶ and Jakob Weiss.¹⁷ The first, a former PhD student of Conrad Cichorius at the University of Breslau and (at that time) professor at the University of Bucharest, was also a corresponding member of the Romanian Academy and a prestigious archaeologist. In his work, Pârvan denied the possibility of more than one episcopal see in Scythia, dismissed the information in *Notitia* 3 as unreliable, and proposed that basilica 'B' in Tropaeum Traiani had never been finished because of the barbarian invasions.¹⁸ Jakob Weiss published a different opinion. He took the information in *Notitia* 3 as the basis for his thesis that at a certain historical moment (before the Avar invasion), the see of Tomi became a metropolis with suffragan bishoprics, and Tropeaum Traiani being one of these.¹⁹

In the following year, 1912, Jakob Weiss's book was reviewed by Ernst Gerland, a former student of Heinrich Gelzer and (at that time) professor at Kaiserin-Friedrich-Gymnasium (a secondary school in Bad Homburg, Germany). Gerland rejected Weiss's thesis and maintained that Scythia had never been an ecclesiastical province, but only a civil one, which was part of the ecclesiastical province of Moesia Secunda. Therefore, the episcopal see of Tomi could not have been a metropolis. He admitted, however, that Tomi could

13 On the dialogue between Netzhammer and Von Cube, see Raymund Netzhammer, *Die christlichen Altertümer der Dobrudscha. Eine archäologische Studie* (Bucharest: Buchdruckerei "Eminescu," 1906), p. 37.

14 Raymund Netzhammer, *Nach Adamclissi. Ein Sommerausflug in das Pompeji der Dobrogea* (Salzburg: Katholische Kirchenzeitung, 1906), pp. 3, 12, and 16.

15 Netzhammer, *Die christlichen Altertümer* (1906), pp. 35–38.

16 Vasile Pârvan, *Contribuții epigrafice la istoria creștinismului daco-roman* [Epigraphic Contributions to the History of Daco-Roman Christianity] (Bucharest: SOCEC & Co., 1911).

17 Jakob Weiss, *Die Dobrudscha im Altertum. Historische Landschaftskunde*, (Zur Kunde der Balkanhalbinsel. Reisen und beobachtungen) 12 (Sarajevo: Kajon, 1911).

18 Pârvan, *Contribuții epigrafice*, p. 68, n. 322.

19 Weiss, *Die Dobrudscha im Altertum*, pp. 67 and 83–84.

have become an autocephalous archbishopric during the barbarian invasions of the 4th and 5th centuries.²⁰

At that same time, after finishing excavations at basilica 'B' in Tropaeum Traiani, Pârvan changed his earlier views and plainly affirmed that the basilica was in fact a cathedral, built c.530. He admitted that other cities in *Notitia* 3 (but certainly not all) may have become episcopal sees, as well.²¹

Six years later, Jacques Zeiller, at that time a history professor at University of Fribourg (Switzerland), published his dissertation of Christianity in the Danube provinces of the empire. On the issue of the church organization in Scythia, he revived the idea that Scythia had only one bishopric, that of Tomi. To support this statement, Zeiller invoked well-known references (Sozomen, Zeno's law, and Παλαιά Τάκτικά). Regarding the paragraph on Scythia province in *Notitia* 3, he accepted Duchesne's idea. He nonetheless mentioned the recent (at that time) discovery at Axiopolis (now Cernavodă, Romania) of a baptismal font, but did not make any comments upon this discovery. He in turn rejected Pârvan's idea of a bishopric at Tropaeum Traiani. According to him, the baptistery next to basilica 'B' was used by the bishop of Tomi during his pastoral visits.²²

At that same time (the last year of World War I), Netzhammer published a new study, in which he mentioned the baptistery of Tropaeum Traiani and the baptismal font of Axiopolis and admitted that there may have been another in Callatis (now Mangalia, Romania). But Netzhammer still rejected the idea that more than one episcopal see existed at the same time in Scythia. According to him, Tropaeum Traiani had temporarily become the residence of the hierarchs in Tomi, after the destruction of the latter city.²³

However, in an additional footnote (*41) in this book, Netzhammer admitted that basilica 'B' of Tropaeum Traiani served as a cathedral to a bishopric founded by Emperor Justinian I. He mentioned there the article "Dobrogea" [Dobruja], signed by Carol Auner and published subsequently.²⁴ Later,

20 Ernst Gerland, "Rezension: J. Weiss, *Die Dobrudscha im Altertum*," *Berliner Philologische Wochenschrift* 32 (1912), no. 30, col. 946–947.

21 Vasile Pârvan, *Cetatea Tropaeum. Considerații istorice* [The Fortress of Tropaeum. Historical Considerations] (Bucharest: Gutenberg, 1912), pp. 106–112, with n. 160.

22 Jacques Zeiller, *Les origines chrétiennes dans les provinces danubiennes de l'empire romain* (Paris: De Boccard, 1918), pp. 168–171 and 202. See also Jacques Zeiller, "Anciens monuments chrétiens des provinces danubiennes de l'empire romain," in *Strena Buliciana/Buličev Zbornik*, eds. Frane Bulić, Mihovil Abramić, and Viktor Hoffiller (Zagreb/Split: Narodnih Novina, 1924), pp. 415–416.

23 Netzhammer, *Die christlichen Altertümer* (1918), pp. 30–32, 38, 123–124, 170, and 209–210.

24 Netzhammer, *Die christlichen Altertümer* (1918), p. 209.

however, Netzhammer maintained the opposite thesis that Tomi, although a metropolitan city, never had any suffragan bishoprics.²⁵

Two years later, in 1920, the study of Carol Auner was published. He was a former director of the Roman Catholic Holy Spirit Seminary in Bucharest (1886–1900). Auner, like Pârvan, attributed to Justinian I the establishment of an episcopal see at Tropaeum Traiani and even admitted the possibility of another bishopric in Axiopolis, established under the reign of the same emperor. However, he also accepted Duchesne's idea that the bishoprics in *Notitia* 3 were civil or military circumscriptions of the province, not episcopal sees.²⁶

In 1924, Pârvan returned to this topic in a study about suffragan bishoprics in Scythia, in which he considered the reliability of *Notitia* 3. He thought (as a hypothesis) that all those bishoprics had been created between 430 and 527, at a time when the bishop of Tomi, isolated in his city because of barbarian attacks, could no longer maintain the contact with the rest of the cities of his province. Under those circumstances, local communities had to establish their own bishoprics. The official recognition of those ordinary bishoprics by the civil and church authorities of Constantinople took place under Justinian I.²⁷

A decade later, Gerasimos Iōannou Konidarēs published his dissertation on the metropoleis and archbishoprics of the patriarchate of Constantinople (4th–10th c.), where he referred also to the information exposed in *Notitia* 3. Regarding Scythia, Konidarēs admitted the existence of the suffragan bishoprics mentioned in this document, considering that the see of Tomi was raised to the rank of autocephalous archbishopric after the year 451 and to that of metropolis during the reign of Justinian I.²⁸ On the other hand, Radu Vulpe, a disciple of Pârvan, became professor at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy in

25 Raymund Netzhammer, "Die altchristliche Kirchenprovinz Scythien (Tomis)," in *Strena Buliciana/Buličev Zbornik*, eds. Frane Bulić, Mihovil Abramić, and Viktor Hoffiller (Zagreb/Split: Narodnih Novina, 1924), p. 397. From another study of Raymund Netzhammer [*Epiktet und Astion: diokletianische Märtyrer am Donaudelta* (Zug: E. Kalt-Zehnder, 1936)], pp. 13–14], published subsequently, could be inferred that he eventually accepted the existence of the bishoprics mentioned in *Notitia* 3.

26 Carol Auner, "Dobrogea" [Dobruja], in *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie chrétienne et de Liturgie*, IV/1, eds. Fernand Cabrol and Henri Leclercq (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1920), col. 1253.

27 Vasile Pârvan, "Nuove considerazioni sul vescovato della Scizia Minore," *Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia* 3, *Rendiconti* 2 (1923–1924), pp. 117–135.

28 Gerasimos Iōannou Konidarēs, *Ai mētropoleis kai arhiepiskopai tou oikoumenikou patriarheiou kai ē «taxis» autōn* [The Metropoleis and Archbishoprics of the Ecumenical Patriarchate and Their "Taxis"], 1/1, (*Texte und Forschungen zur byzantinisch-neugriechischen Philologie*) 13 (Athens: Chronika, 1934), p. 50.

Bucharest. He maintained that only some of the cities mentioned in *Notitia* 3, such as Tropaeum Traiani and Callatis, had been episcopal sees.²⁹

After World War II, archaeology greatly contributed to the development of new scholarly positions on this matter, as did the study of written sources, which had been neglected up to that point. Emilian Popescu pointed to the fact that Paternus of Tomi (498–520) was officially attested with suffragan bishops in 519 and with metropolitan rank in 520. At the same time, the discovery in Callatis of an inscribed stone cross, mentioning former hierarchs of this city (considered by Popescu), and the discovery in Histria (now Istria, Romania) of an episcopal residence, prompted him to trust the list of episcopal sees mentioned in *Notitia* 3. He dated their establishment to the reign of Anastasius I (491–518). According to Popescu, Tomi started as an ordinary bishopric, until the late 4th or early 5th century, when it was raised to the rank of autocephalous archbishopric, then to that of metropolitan see under Anastasius I.³⁰ Many scholars have accepted Popescu's conclusions.³¹ Scholars only expressed

29 Radu Vulpe, *Histoire ancienne de la Dobroudja* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1938), pp. 340–344.

30 Emilian Popescu, "Contributions à la géographie historique de la Péninsule Balkanique aux v^e–viii^e siècles," *Dacia* [N.S.] 13 (1969), pp. 403–415; Emilian Popescu, *Inscriptiile grecești și latine din secolele IV–XIII descoperite în România* [The Greek and Latin Inscriptions from the 4th to 13th Centuries Discovered in Romania], (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1976), pp. 30, 35, 98, and 137; Emilian Popescu, "Organizarea ecleziastică a provinciei Scythia Minor în secolele IV–VI" [The Ecclesiastical Organization of the Province of Scythia Minor in the 4th–6th Centuries], *Studii Teologice* 23 (1980), nos. 7–10, pp. 590–605; Emilian Popescu, *Christianitas Daco-Romana. Florilegium studiorum* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1994), pp. 74–91, 124–156, and 200–216.

31 Ion Barnea, "Perioada Dominatului" [The Dominate], in Radu Vulpe and Ion Barnea, *Din istoria Dobrogei* [A History of Dobruja], 2 (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1968), pp. 458–459; Niculae Șerbănescu, "1600 de ani de la prima mărturie documentară despre existența Episcopiei Tomisului" [1600 Years since the First Documentary Attestation of the Bishopric of Tomi], *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 87 (1969), nos. 9–10, pp. 1019–1021; Noël Duval, "L'archéologie chrétienne en Roumanie à propos de deux livres récents de I. Barnea," *Revue archéologique* [N.S.] 2 (1980), p. 314; Ioan Rămureanu, *Actele Martirice* [The Acts of the Martyrs], (Părinți și scriitori bisericesti) 11 (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1982), p. 350; Adrian Rădulescu, "Bazilici și monumente creștine în contextul etnogenezei românești din sec. III–VII în Dobrogea" [Christian Basilicas and Monuments in Dobruja from the 3rd–7th Centuries in the Context of the Romanian Ethnogenesis], in *Monumente istorice și izvoare creștine. Mărturii de străveche existență și de continuitate a românilor pe teritoriul Dunării de Jos și al Dobrogei*, eds. Antim Nica et al. (Galați: Editura Arhiepiscopiei Tomisului și Dunării și Jos, 1987), pp. 13, 47–48, and 69–70; Alexandru Barnea, "La Dobroudja aux iv^e–vii^e siècles de n.è.," in Alexandru Suceveanu and Alexandru Barnea, *La Dobroudja Romaine* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1991), pp. 290–292; Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române* [The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church], 1 (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1991), pp. 149–150; Valeriu Georgescu

reservation in regard to the number of ordinary bishoprics existing in Scythia. The latter reserves were also stimulated by Jean Darrouzès, who, publishing a new edition of the episcopal lists of the patriarchate of Constantinople, reaffirmed Louis Duchesne's idea about the content of the rubric on Scythia in *Notitia* 3.³²

The dating of Tomi metropolis foundation advanced by Popescu was rejected by Georgi Atanasov. In a study published in 2007, the Bulgarian scholar

and Mihai Ionescu, "Mărturii creștine la Callatis" [Christian Testimonies at Callatis], *Pontica* 28–29 (1995–1996), pp. 187–188; Florian Duță, "Des précisions sur la biographie de Denys le Petit," *Revue de droit canonique* 49 (1999), no. 1, pp. 288–289; Virgil Lungu, *Creștinismul în Scythia Minor în contextul vest-pontic* [The Christianity in Scythia Minor in the West-Pontic Context], (Sibiu/Constanța: T.C. Sen, 2000), pp. 68, 78, and 80–82; Ventsislav Dintchev, "The Limit of Urban Life in the Late Antique Dioceses of *Thracia* and *Dacia*: The Overestimated Centers," *Archaeologia Bulgarica* 4 (2000), no. 2, pp. 77–78; Octavian Bounegru and Virgil Lungu, "Histria. Cercetări recente în cartierul Domus" [Histria. Recent Explorations in the Domus District], *Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche și Arheologie* 54–56 (2003–2005), pp. 167–178; Dana Iuliana Viezure, "On the Origins of the *Unus de Trinitate* Controversy," *Annual of Medieval Studies at Central European University Budapest* 10 (2004), pp. 15–16; Alexandru Suceveanu, *Histria. Les résultats des fouilles. XIII. La basilique épiscopale* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2007), pp. 29, 101, 105, 130, 137–138, and 140–141; Nelu Zugravu, "Studiu introductiv, notițe biobibliografice, note și comentarii" [Introductory Study, Biobibliographical Notes, Footnotes, and Comments], in Nelu Zugravu, ed., *Fontes Historiae Daco-Romanae Christianitatis* (Iași: Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza," 2008), pp. 91–92; Manfred Oppermann, *Das frühe Christentum an der Westküste des Schwarzen Meeres und im anschließenden Binnenland: historische und archäologische Zeugnisse*, (Schriften des Zentrums für Archäologie und Kulturgeschichte des Schwarzmeerraumes) 19 (Langenweißbach: Beier & Beran, 2010), pp. 40–41; Alexandru Madgearu, "The Plate of Paternus from the Malaja Pereščepina Treasure: Booty or Gift?" in *Études byzantines et post-byzantines*, 6, eds. Emilian Popescu and Tudor Teoteoi (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2011), pp. 66–67; Robert Born, *Die Christianisierung der Städte der Provinz Scythia Minor ein Beitrag zum spätantiken Urbanismus auf dem Balkan*, (Spätantike—Frühes Christentum—Byzanz. Reihe B, Studien und Perspektiven) 36 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2012), pp. 93–99, 121–123, and 133–135; Ioan Iațcu, *Construcții religioase creștine în provincia Scythia: secolele IV–VI p.Chr.* [Christian Religious Constructions in the Province of Scythia: The 4th–6th Centuries AD] (Brăila: Istros, 2012), pp. 29–31; Nicolae Alexandru, "Creștinismul în lumina unor documente arheologice de la Callatis (Mangalia) în secolul al IV-lea" [Christianity in the Light of Some Archaeological Documents from Callatis (Mangalia) in the 4th Century], in *Cruce și misiune. Sfinții Împărați Constantin și Elena—promotori ai libertății religioase și apărători ai Bisericii*, 2, eds. Emilian Popescu and Viorel Ioniță (Bucharest: Basilica, 2013), p. 689; Dan Ruscu, "Christianity and Urban Changes in Late Roman Scythia Minor," in *Ethnic Constructs, Royal Dynasties and Historical Geography around the Black Sea Littoral*, eds. Altay Coşkun, Joanna Porucznik, and Germain Payen (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2021), p. 323.

32 Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum*, pp. 28–29.

noted that Valentinian of Tomi (c.550) was mentioned as an ordinary bishop ('*episcopus*'), not as a metropolitan ('*episcopus metropolitanus*').³³ According to Atanasov, the see of Tomi could not have been raised to the metropolitan rank before the middle of the 6th century.³⁴

Meanwhile, the Romanian scholar Nelu Zugravu, while dating the raising of the episcopal see to the metropolitan rank during the reign of Anastasius I, claimed that under Justinian I (536) Tomi became an autocephalous archbishopric. In that same study, Zugravu noted that two bishops of Tomi [Theotimus I (c.390–c.407) and Theotimus II (c.457/458)] appear as metropolitans, but he could not explain how a metropolis could exist at a time when the see of Tomi supposedly had no suffragan bishoprics.³⁵

Of importance is also the study of Robert Born, who pleaded for the foundation of the suffragan bishoprics in Histria and Tropaeum Traiani based on archaeological discoveries. Noteworthy in his case is the mention that in Histria the building of the cathedral (under Justinian I) took place at approximately 14 years from the establishment of the local bishopric (under Anastasius I).³⁶

In 2018, Ionuț Holubeanu published a book in which he proposed a totally different evolution of the Tomi see rank.³⁷ According to his analysis, Tomi became a great metropolis in 381 (but with suffragan bishoprics outside the Roman province of Scythia) and was demoted to the rank of an autocephalous archbishopric at the beginning of the 7th century (*post c.612?*), while the suffragan bishoprics on the territory of Roman Scythia were founded in c.536.³⁸

Two years later, Dominic Moreau reviewed Holubeanu's book, stating that the Romanian scholar did not bring anything new, but only repeated the ideas

33 On this issue, see below, chapter 4: '*Valentinianus episcopus Scythiae*'.

34 Georgi Atanasov, *Khristiānskūāt Durostorum-Drūstūr* [The Christian Durostorum-Drastar] (Veliko Tarnovo: Zograf, 2007), pp. 89 and 91 (n. 9). See also Georgi Atanasov, "Christianity along the Lower Danube Limes in the Roman Provinces of Dacia Ripensis, Moesia Secunda and Scythia Minor (4th–6th c. AD)," in *The Lower Danube Roman Limes (1st–6th C. AD)*, eds. Lyudmil Vagalinski, Nikolay Sharankov, and Sergey Torbatov (Sofia: NIAM-BAS, 2012), pp. 359–364; Georgi Atanasov and Yoto Valeriev, "La résidence épiscopale à proximité de la cathédrale de la ville romano-byzantine de Zaldapa dans la province de Scythie," *Archaeologia Bulgarica* 24 (2020), no. 1, pp. 50–51.

35 Zugravu, "Studiu introductiv," pp. 87–95.

36 Born, *Die Christianisierung*, pp. 93–99, 121–123, and 133–135.

37 Ionuț Holubeanu, *Organizarea bisericească în Scythia și Moesia Secunda în secolele IV–VII* [The Ecclesiastical Organization in Scythia and Moesia Secunda in the 4th–7th Centuries] (Bucharest: Basilica, 2018), pp. 29–67.

38 This thesis will be extensively analyzed in the first part of this book.

and arguments of Emilian Popescu and Vasile Pârvan.³⁹ Later, in 2022, Moreau published a study in which he exposed his viewpoint on the church organization in Roman Scythia, sustaining that there is no clear proof leading to the conclusion that the see of Tomi had ever had suffragan bishoprics.⁴⁰

A topic of scholarly debate is also the dating of Tomi bishopric's raising to the rank of an autocephalous archbishopric. Some of the scholars admit the possibility for Bishops Evangelicus (c.304) and Vetranio (c.367– c.374) to have already held this rank,⁴¹ whereas others accept Emilian Popescu's dating (the end of the 4th–the beginning of the 5th century).⁴² In other works, it is dated either to 431, at the latest, or to before 451, or between 451 and 457.⁴³ More

39 Dominic Moreau, "L'organisation ecclésiastique en Scythie Mineure et Mésie Seconde aux IV^e–VI^e siècles," *Spartokos a lu* (30 juin 2020). Available at <https://spartokos.wordpress.com/2020/06/30/lorganisation-ecclesiastique-en-scythie-mineure-et-mesie-seconde-aux-ive-viie-s/>. Accessed 2022 July 9.

40 Dominic Moreau, "To Baptise in Late Antiquity—An Unfounded Episcopal Prerogative. Some Remarks Inspired by the 'Scythian' Case," *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* 98 (2022), no. 1, pp. 99–103.

41 Alexandru Suceveanu, "Contribuții la istoria orașelor romane din Dobrogea. Note de geografie istorică" [Contributions to the History of the Roman Cities in Dobruja. Notes on Historical Geography], *Historia Urbana* 1 (1993), no. 2, p. 145; Alexandru Suceveanu, "Cercetări recente în Histria creștină" [Recent Research in Christian Histria], in *Omagiu Virgil Cândea la 75 de ani*, 2, ed. Paul H. Stahl (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române/Roza Vânturilor, 2002), p. 286; Suceveanu, *Histria*, pp. 135–137 and 140; Alexandru Suceveanu and Iuliana Barnea, "Contributions à l'histoire des villes romaines de la Dobroudja," *Dacia* [N.S.] 37 (1993), pp. 174, 176, and 178.

42 Lungu, *Creștinismul*, pp. 78 and 82; Born, *Die Christianisierung*, p. 29.

43 *Ante 431*: Ernst Gerland, "Rezension," col. 947; Ernst Gerland, *Corpus notitiarum episcopatum ecclesiae orientalis Graecae. I. Die Genesis der Notitia episcopatum. 1. Einleitung* (Istanbul: Socii Assumptionistae Chalcedonenses, 1931), p. 10; Ernst Gerland and Vitalien Laurent, *Corpus notitiarum episcopatum ecclesiae orientalis Graecae. I. Les listes conciliaires* (Istanbul: Socii Assumptionistae Chalcedonenses, 1936), pp. 32, 53, 56, and 65; Vitalien Laurent, "Note d'histoire ecclésiastique: La Scythie mineure fut-elle représentée au Concile de Chalcédoine?" *Études byzantines* 3 (1945), p. 120, n. 19; Constantin Pârva, "Autocefalia Bisericii Ortodoxe Române" [The Autocephaly of the Romanian Orthodox Church], *Studii Teologice* 6 (1954), nos. 9–10, p. 514; Hans-Georg Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich* (Byzantinisches Handbuch im Rahmen des Handbuchs de Altertumswissenschaft) 11/1 (Munich: Beck, 1959), pp. 68 and 175–176; Liviu Stan, "Obârșia autocefaliei și autonomiei. Teze noi" [The Origin of the Autocephaly and Ecclesiastical Autonomy. New Theses], *Mitropolia Olteniei* 13 (1961), nos. 1–4, pp. 88–89, n. 33. *Ante 451*: Gelzer, "Zur Zeitbestimmung," pp. 342, 344–345, and 351. Between 451 and 457: Evangelos Chrysos, "Zur Entstehung der Institution der Autokephalen Erzbistümer," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 62 (1969), pp. 277–279, n. 72; Gereon Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I. Das oströmische Reich in den ersten drei Jahren seiner Regierung (457–460 n. Chr.)* (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2010), pp. 521–522, 826 (n. 5), and 827.

recently, as already shown, the reign of Justinian I and even the beginning of the 7th century are considered.⁴⁴

As this historiographic overview reveals, and despite the scholars' efforts, the church organization in Roman Scythia remains a subject of debate. There is no scholarly consensus at present on any aspect related to the evolution of the episcopal see of Tomi: if it was a great metropolis or not, when it became a great metropolis (if ever), which were its suffragan bishoprics, when it became an autocephalous archbishopric, and what is the nature (civil or ecclesiastical) of the information exposed in the rubric of Scythia in *Notitia* 3. This book aims to clarify as many of these aspects in the pages that follow.

44 Under Justinian I: Zugravu, "Studiu introductiv," pp. 87–95; Iașcu, *Construcții*, p. 28. The beginning of the 7th century: Holubeanu, *Organizarea*, pp. 59–67.

The See of Tomi in the Period between the 4th and the 7th Centuries AD

2.1 Tomi as the Only See of Scythia as Attested in Documents

Many textual sources only attest to the existence of the bishop of Tomi on the territory of Scythia. Some of them, such as Sozomen (*Historia ecclesiastica* VI.21.3), Zeno's law of 474–484 (*Codex Iustinianus* 1.3.35.2), *Encyclia* (457–458), and the old *Notitiae episcopatum* (Παλαιά Τακτικά) of the Church of Constantinople have been quoted in specialized literature as early as the end of the nineteenth century.¹ Others have been identified and published recently, and are therefore less known. This information is presented in chronological order in this subchapter.

The oldest documentary attestation of the atypical organization of the Church in Scythia can be found in the *Passion* of the Holy Martyrs Epictet and Astion. It specifies that when these two saints suffered martyrdom (23 May 304), Evangelicus was bishop of the churches in the province: “At that time, the most blest Evangelicus was high-priest and chief (*Pontifex et praepositus*) of the holy churches in that province [i.e., Scythia].”²

The following information is related to an event that took place in the second half of the 4th century. Writing about Bishop Vetranio of Tomi standing up to the Semi-Arian Emperor Valens (364–375) in 369, the historian Sozomen mentions that Vetranio was bishop of all the churches in the province of Scythia:

According to an ancient custom, which still prevails, all the churches of the whole country [i.e., the Roman Scythia] are under the sway of one bishop. Vetranio ruled over these churches at the time when the emperor visited Tomi.³

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- 1 See above, chapter 1: ‘Scholarly views on the evolution of the ecclesiastical organization of Roman Scythia.’
 - 2 *De ss. Epicteto presb. et Astione monacho, martyribus abmiridensibus in Scythia* III.26, in *Acta Sanctorum Julii*, 2, eds. Conrado Janningo, Joannes Baptista Sollerio, and Joannes Pinio (Antwerp: Apud Iacobum du Moulin, 1721), p. 546.
 - 3 Sozomenos, *Historia ecclesiastica* VI.21.3, in *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Christian Hansen Günther, (Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller) 4 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995),

In a similar way, Theodoret of Cyrrhus, mentioning the same event, specifies that Vetranio was bishop of all the cities in the province of Scythia: “Bretanio [i.e., Vetranio], a man distinguished by various virtues, and entrusted with the episcopal government of all the cities of Scythia ...”⁴

The law of Emperor Theodosius I (379–395), issued on 30 July 381, after the close of the First Council of Constantinople (9 July 381), also indirectly confirms this particularity of the Istro-Pontic Church. It mentions the hierarchs considered representatives of the Catholic faith in the eastern part of the Roman Empire. Each of their names, irrespective of their rank in the Church (archbishop, metropolitan, or ordinary bishop), is mentioned next to that of their bishopric (the city of residence) and not alongside that of the (ecclesiastical) province. The only exception is the hierarch of Tomi, whose name is mentioned next to that of Scythia:

We command that all churches shall immediately be surrendered ... to those bishops who appear to have been associated in the communion of Nectarius, Bishop of the Church of Constantinople, and of Timotheus, Bishop of the City of Alexandria in Egypt; to those bishops also who, in the regions of the Orient, appear to be communicants with Pelagius, Bishop of Laodicea, and with Diodorus, Bishop of Tarsus; also, in the Proconsular Province of Asia and in the Diocese of Asia, with Amphilocheus, Bishop of Iconium, and with Optimus, Bishop of Antioch; in the Diocese of Pontus, with Helladius, Bishop of Caesarea, and with Otreius of Melitene, and with Gregorius, Bishop of Nyssa; with Terennius, Bishop of Scythia, and with Marmarius, Bishop of Marcianopolis.⁵

This difference in the text of the law can be explained by the particularity of the church organization in Scythia. It reflects the fact that the territory of

p. 263^{21–23}; Sozomen, *The Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Chester D. Hartranft, (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers) 11/2 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 799.

4 Theodoretus Cyrensis, *Historia ecclesiastica* IV.35.1, in *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Léon Parmentier, (Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller) 19 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1911), p. 273^{1–2}; Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *The Ecclesiastical History*, trans. and notes Blomfield Jackson, (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers) 11/3 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1969), p. 298.

5 *Codex Theodosianus* XVI.1.3, in *Theodosiani libri XVI cum constitutionibus Sirmondianis et Leges Novellae ad Theodosianum pertinentes*, 1/2, eds. Theodor Mommsen and Paul Martin Meyer (Berlin: Königlich Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1905), p. 834^{1–11}; *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions*, in *The Corpus of Roman Law (Corpus Juris Romani)*, 1, trans., comment., gloss., and bibliogr. Clyde Pharr, Theresa Sherrer Davidson, and Mary Brown Pharr, intro. C. Dickerman Williams (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1952), p. [440].

jurisdiction of Terennius/Terentius/Gerontius (381) was not limited to the city of Tomi, but included the whole civil province of Scythia, with all the cities on its territory.

Returning to Sozomen, he confirmed the special organization of the Church in Scythia. This is demonstrated by two other historical moments. The first one is related to the end of the 4th and the beginning of the 5th century, at the time of Bishop Theotimus I of Tomi (c.390–c.407). Sozomen asserts that he led both the Church of Tomi and that of all the other cities in Scythia: “The Church of Tomi, and indeed all the churches of Scythia, were at this period under the government of Theotimus, a Scythian.”⁶ The second moment is related to the period when Sozomen wrote his work (439–450).⁷ The church historian mentions in two different parts that the specific aspect of ecclesiastical organization in Scythia continued in his time: “There are, for instance, many cities in Scythia, and yet they all have but one bishop.”⁸

Not long after, in 457–458, during the inquiry that Emperor Leo I (457–474) carried out in almost all the provinces of the Eastern Roman Empire, Theotimus II of Tomi (c.457/458) appears to be the only sender of the response letter from Scythia: “Theotimus the humble bishop of the region of Scythia to the most pious and most Christian lord, our Emperor Leo ...”⁹ This happened as the emperor had asked the metropolitans to analyze the topics he proposed together with all the hierarchs in their provinces. Although this information does not rule out the existence of suffragan sees of Tomi located outside Roman Scythia, it can be considered as proof that there were no ordinary bishoprics in the province.¹⁰

Between 474 and 484, Emperor Zeno (474–491) issued a law imposing the existence of a bishopric in all the settlements with the rank of city (*civitas*/πόλις). In one of the paragraphs, Scythia was excluded from its provisions; the churches of this province remained under the direct guidance of the bishop of Tomi:

6 Sozomenos, *Historia ecclesiastica* VII.26.6, p. 341^{21–22}; trans., p. 885.

7 On the dating of Sozomen's *Ecclesiastical History*, see Peter Heather and John Matthews, *The Goths in the Fourth Century*, 2nd ed. (Translated Texts for Historians) 11 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004), pp. 96–97, n. 1.

8 Sozomenos, *Historia ecclesiastica* VII.19.2, p. 330^{12–13}; trans., p. 873. Similarly, Sozomenos, *Historia ecclesiastica* VI.21.3 (see above, p. 30, the paragraph from n. 3).

9 *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum* (hereafter cited as *ACO*), 11/5, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1936), p. 31^{12–13}.

10 Historical data in *Encyclicia* and their importance for the proper understanding of the special case of church organization in Scythia will be treated thoroughly here-after, in subchapter 2.2.2: ‘The *Encyclicia* (457–458) of emperor Leo I.’

Although We have decreed these provisions generally, We have also taken note of the state of the most holy churches under the jurisdiction of Tomis in the province of Scythia; and that it is impossible in any other way to save the aforesaid most holy churches, damaged by continuous barbarian incursions or otherwise afflicted by want, but that they should receive the foresight of the reverend bishop of Tomis, which city is also the capital of the province. We thus decree that they are excepted from the present imperial enactment and in no way subject to its compulsoriness, but shall remain in their own special form.¹¹

The special situation of Scythia as excepted from the provisions of Zeno's law was valid in 529 as well, when the text of the law was entirely republished in the *Codex of Justinian*.¹² Emperor Justinian I had explicitly asked the committee of legal experts charged with the content of the collection to exclude from the old legislation any useless or outdated provision.¹³ This would have been the case with the paragraph about Scythia, if the situation in this province had been changed.

However, a correction of the dating proposed by Georgi Atanasov (the one who put forward this observation) is necessary. More precisely, 529 is the year of the first publication of the *Codex of Justinian*, whose text was lost. The second edition of the collection of laws (*Codex repetitiae praelectionis*) is preserved at present, published on 16 November 534.¹⁴ This shows that the special church

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- 11 *The Codex of Justinian* 1.3.35.2, in Bruce W. Frier et al., eds., *The Codex of Justinian. A New Annotated Translation, with Parallel Latin and Greek Text*, 1 (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 100–101.
- 12 Georgi Atanasov, *Khristiānskiūat Durostorum-Drūstūr* [The Christian Durostorum-Drastar] (Veliko Tarnovo: Zograf, 2007), p. 89; Georgi Atanasov, "Christianity along the Lower Danube Limes in the Roman Provinces of Dacia Ripensis, Moesia Secunda and Scythia Minor (4th–6th c. AD)," in *The Lower Danube Roman Limes (1st–6th C. AD)*, eds. Lyudmil Vagalinski, Nikolay Sharankov, and Sergey Torbatov (Sofia: NIAM-BAS, 2012), pp. 360–361. This aspect had been pointed back in 1961 by Liviu Stan, but had no response in the academic world—see Liviu Stan, "Obârșia autocefaliei și autonomiei. Teze noi" [The Origin of the Autocephaly and Ecclesiastical Autonomy. New Theses], *Mitropolia Olteniei* 13 (1961), nos. 1–4, pp. 88–89, n. 33.
- 13 Herbert Felix Jolowicz and Barry Nicholas, *Historical Introduction to the Study of Roman Law*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 479 and 493–495; Caroline Humfress, "Law and Legal Practice in the Age of Justinian," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian*, ed. Michael Maas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 163–164. On this matter, see also below subchapter 3.1: 'Justinian I's code and Zeno's law.'
- 14 Jolowicz and Nicholas, *Historical Introduction*, pp. 479 and 493–496; Barry Nicholas, "Codex," in *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 2nd ed., eds. Nicholas Geoffrey Lemprière

organization in Scythia was maintained at least until November 534. Indeed, it is hard to believe that two committees including the best jurists of their time could have successively omitted the paragraph on Scythia if a change in the church organization of this province had occurred.¹⁵

Some scholars consider that George of Cyprus also mentioned the presence of only one bishop in Scythia in his *Description of the Roman world*, but this is an inaccurate observation.¹⁶ In the work of the Byzantine geographer, dated to 600–610, cities, towns, fortresses, and administrative divisions of the Eastern Roman Empire are listed, not church organizations. Moreover, there are no descriptions of the provinces in the Balkans, including Scythia, in the preserved fragments of this writing.¹⁷

Finally, in four of the old *Notitiae episcopatum* (1–2 and 4–5) of the Church of Constantinople written between the first half of the 7th and the first half of the 9th century, but exposing older situations of church organization at least in certain cases, the see of Tomi is registered as an autocephalous archbishopric, without suffragan sees.¹⁸

Hammond and Howard Hayes Scullard (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p. 257; Humfress, “Law and legal Practice,” pp. 164–166.

- 15 This conclusion is indirectly confirmed by the case of the city of Leontopolis in Isauria, the second exception to Zeno’s law, also mentioned in *The Codex of Justinian* 1.3.35.3, pp. 100–101. The law stipulates that this city should remain under the guidance of the bishop of Isauropolis. In *Notitia Antiochena*, document written around 570, Leontopolis is not mentioned as episcopal see [see Ernst Honigmann, “Studien zur Notitia Antiochena,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 25 (1925), p. 74]. This case also shows the fact that Justinian’s legal experts took into account the church realities of their times.
- 16 See Atanassov, “Christianity,” pp. 360–361.
- 17 See Ernst Honigmann, *Le Synekdèmos d’Hiérokès et l’opuscule géographique de Georges de Chypre: texte, introduction, commentaire et cartes*, (Corpus Bruxellense historiae Byzantinae. Forma imperii Byzantini) 1 (Brussels: Éditions de l’Institut de philologie et d’histoire orientales et slaves, 1939), pp. 49–70; Arnold Hugh Martin Jones, *Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 514–521; Alexander P. Kazhdan, “George of Cyprus,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, 2, eds. Alexander P. Kazhdan et al. (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 837–838.
- 18 Jean Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae: Texte critique, introduction et notes*, (Géographie ecclésiastique de l’empire Byzantin) 1 (Paris: Institut français d’études byzantines, 1981), 1.40, p. 205; 2.43, p. 217; 4.41, p. 250; 5.45, p. 265. For a general presentation of the dating of *Notitiae episcopatum*, see Emilian Popescu, *Christianitas Daco-Romana. Florilegium studiorum* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1994), pp. 143–151. For a recent evaluation of the dating *Notitia* 1, see Marek Jankowiak, “Byzance sur la mer Noire sous Constant II (641–668): la date de la première notice du patriarcat de Constantinople,” in *Proceedings of the 22nd International Congress of Byzantine Studies, Sofia, 22–27 august 2011*, 3, ed. Iliya Iliev (Sofia: Bulgarian Historical Heritage Foundation, 2011), pp. 56–57. For the interpretation of the information on Moesia Secunda and Scythia in *Notitiae* 1–5, see Ionuț Holubeanu, “Interpreting

2.2 Tomi as a Metropolitan See Attested in Documents

2.2.1 *The End of the 4th and the First Half of the 5th Century AD*

Either directly or indirectly, certain documents attest the hierarchs of Tomi also as metropolitans. This evidence, omitted in many studies, is almost as numerous and, at least in some cases, as clear as that attesting only the episcopal see of Tomi in the province between the Danube and the Black Sea. This evidence is presented here-after, in chronological order.

First of all, some clarifications for a better understanding of the topic are necessary. In Late Antiquity there were in existence two types of metropolitan sees: great metropoleis and titular metropolitan sees. The first ones were the sees of the urban settlements that were provincial capitals and had suffragan bishoprics. The second ones, also known as ‘autocephalous metropoleis’ or ‘autocephalous archbishoprics,’ were the sees of the cities that were granted the title of metropolises (not being provincial capitals). The titular metropolitan sees had not a province attached and suffragan bishoprics and ranked between the great metropoleis and the ordinary bishoprics.¹⁹ Their canonical existence were regulated by canon 12 of the Council of Chalcedon (451).²⁰ The two ranks were not compatible, as a see could not be both a great metropolis and a titular metropolitan see at the same time. Ignorance of this aspect can lead to misinterpretations and erroneous conclusions.²¹

As for the see of Tomi, the oldest information attesting a hierarch there as a metropolitan can be found in the list of the bishops who attended the First Council of Constantinople (381). The original lists of the council (no longer extant) were rearranged after some time, and the bishops were grouped

Notitiae Episcopatum,” in *4th International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conferences on Social Sciences and Arts SGEM 2017. Conference Proceedings*, 2/11, eds. Aleksander Bursche et al. (Sofia: STEF92, 2017), pp. 279–284.

19 Hans-Georg Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich*, (Byzantinisches Handbuch im Rahmen des Handbuchs de Altertumswissenschaft) 11/1 (Munich: Beck, 1959), pp. 67–68; Evangelos Chrysos, “Zur Entstehung der Institution der Autokephalen Erzbistümer,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 62 (1969), pp. 273–279; Richard Price and Michael Gaddis, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, 3, (Translated Texts for Historians) 45 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), p. 208.

20 Norman P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1 (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990), p. 93.

21 See Nelu Zugravu, “Studiu introductiv, notițe bibliografice, note și comentarii” [Introductory Study, Bibliographical Notes, Footnotes, and Comments], in Nelu Zugravu, ed., *Fontes Historiae Daco-Romanae Christianitatis* (Iași: Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza,” 2008), p. 91, where it is stated that the metropolitan see of Tomi (having suffragan bishoprics) was raised (sic!) to the rank of autocephalous archbishopric (i.e., a titular metropolitan see) in 536.

according to the provinces from which they came. This list is preserved in Greek (in two copies), as well as in Latin and Syriac transliterations. The Greek copies (almost identical) are, in many cases, more carelessly written than either the Latin or the Syriac versions. Besides, all of them are somewhat confused toward the end where the Pontic and Thracian bishops are recorded.²² In the Latin and Syriac versions, there is also the heading ‘Scythia’ (‘Σκυθίας’) in this final section, under which three names appear:

Ponti Amasiae
Pansopius Hiberon
Mysiae
Martyrius Marciopolitanus
Scythiae
Terentius Tomeun [i.e., Terentius of the city of Tomi]
Aetherius Cersonissi [i.e., Aetherius of the city of Chersonesus]
Sebastianus Anchialis [i.e., Sebastian of the city of Anchialus]
Spaniae
Agrius Ymimontu
Ponti Polemoniacy
*Atarbius per Cyrillum lectorem*²³

Both Cuthbert Hamilton Turner and Ernst Honigmann, who have tried to rearrange this section of the list, have eliminated the name of Sebastian of Anchialus from the rubric of Scythia and have placed it under the heading “Ἡμιμόντου” (‘Haemimontus’). However, they have kept the name of Aetherius of Chersonesus under the heading ‘Σκυθίας’ (‘Scythia’), after that of Terentius of Tomi.²⁴ These changes are entirely justified, since Anchialus was a city in Haemimontus, and the name of this province appears in the list. Its mention (though in a wrong position) confirms that such a heading (‘Ἡμιμόντου’/Haemimontus) existed in the original list. On the other hand, the preservation of the name of Aetherius in the rubric of Scythia is justified by the

22 Ernst Honigmann, “Recherches sur les listes des Pères de Nicée et de Constantinople,” *Byzantion* 11 (1936), pp. 440–442; Ernst Honigmann, “The Original Lists of the Members of the Council of Nicaea, the Robber-Synod and the Council of Chalcedon,” *Byzantion* 16 (1942–1943), no. 1, p. 20; Hubert Kaufhold, “Griechisch-syrische Väterlisten der frühen griechischen Synoden,” *Oriens Christianus* 77 (1993), pp. 40–43 and 78 (n. 4).

23 *Prisca interpretatio*, in Honigmann, “Recherches sur les listes,” p. 442.

24 Cuthbert Hamilton Turner, “Canons Attributed to the Council of Constantinople AD 381, together with the Names of the Bishops from Two Patmos MSS ΡΟΒ, ΡΟΓ,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 15 (1914), pp. 177–178; Honigmann, “Recherches sur les listes,” p. 446.

fact that no other heading that could be associated with his city (Chersonesus, now Sevastopol, Crimea-Ukraine) appears in the extant manuscripts. Placing the name of Bishop Aetherius of Chersonesus in the rubric for Scythia has been accepted by other scholars, as well.²⁵

This information reveals the existence of an ecclesiastical province of Scythia (‘Σκυθία’) with at least two episcopal sees, namely that of Tomi and that of Chersonesus. The order of names suggests that the first one was considered more important than the second. In subsequent documents (dated between 400 and 553), the hierarchs of Tomi are repeatedly attested as metropolitans (see below), while Longinus, one of the two hierarchs of Chersonesus known in the 5th century, is attested in 448 and 449 as an ordinary bishop.²⁶ This data shows that the see of Tomi had the rank of great metropolis in 381 and that the see of Chersonesus, situated outside the territory of Roman Scythia, was its

25 See Noel Quinton King, “The 150 Holy Fathers of the Council of Constantinople 381 AD. Some Notes on the Bishop-Lists,” in *Studia Patristica*, 1, eds. Kurt Aland and Frank Leslie Cross (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1957), pp. 639–640; Constantine Zuckerman, “The Early Byzantine Strongholds in Eastern Pontus,” in *Travaux et Mémoires*, 11, eds. Gilbert Dagron and Denis Feissel (Paris: De Boccard: 1991), p. 551 (n. 90); I.A. Zavadskaïa, “Christianizatsiia rannevizantiiskogo Chersonesa (IV–VI vv.)” [Conversion to Christianity in Early-Byzantine Chersonesos (The 4th–6th Centuries)], *Materialy po archeologii, istorii i étnografii Tavrii* 10 (2003), p. 417; Andrei Æ. Vinogradov, «Minovala uzhe zima iazycheskogo bezumiiã ...» *Ĥserkov’ i Ĥserkvi Hersona v IV veke po dannym literaturnykh istochnikov i épigrafiiki* [«The Winter of Pagan Madness Has Already Passed ...» The Church and Churches of Chersonesus in the 4th Century according to Literary Sources and Epigraphy] (Moscow: Universitet Dmitriiã Pozharskogo, 2010), pp. 21, 39–40, 55, 64–65, and 155–156. Contra: Dan Ruscu, “The Ecclesiastical Network of the Regions on the Western and Northern Shores of the Black Sea in Late Antiquity,” in *The Danubian Lands between the Black, Aegean and Adriatic Seas (7th Century BC–10th Century AD). Proceedings of the Fifth International Congress on Black Sea Antiquities (Belgrade, 17–21 September 2013)*, eds. Gocha R. Tsetskladze, Alexandru Avram, and James Hargrave (Oxford: Archaeopress Publishing Ltd, 2015), p. 190, n. 16; Dominic Moreau, “To Baptise in Late Antiquity—An Unfounded Episcopal Prerogative. Some Remarks Inspired by the ‘Scythian’ Case,” *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* 98 (2022), no. 1, p. 100, n. 6. Ruscu asserts that Chersonesus belonged to Bosphorus and proposed that the two Scythiai (i.e., Minor and Pontic/Maior) were mistaken one for the other. However, Chersonesus was never a suffragan of Bosphorus in terms of ecclesiastical organization—see below, subchapters 6.4 (‘The see of Chersonesus’) and 6.5 (‘The see of Bosphorus’). Moreau argues that the last names of the list were not grouped based on provinces (as the previous ones), but under a more general heading: “Πόντος/Black Sea.” In order to justify this interpretation, he disregards the Latin and Syriac versions of the list and relies only on the Greek ones. However, even in the two extant Greek texts the name of Haemimontus (“Ἡμιμόντου”) is mentioned, which indicates the arrangement by provinces in the final section of the original list as well.

26 On the history of the see of Chersonesus, see below, subchapter 6.4: ‘The see of Chersonesus.’

suffragan. This situation is in full agreement with the attestation of Tomi as the only episcopal see of the Roman province of Scythia. On the other hand, this type of organization (a metropolitan see extending its ecclesiastical jurisdiction beyond the limits of its civil province and even beyond the frontier of the empire) should not be surprising, as it is also known in the border regions of the northeastern part of the empire.²⁷

The second piece of information is provided by Palladius of Galatia. Referring to the Home Synod of 400, he noted some of the participants to this event. The first mentioned is Theotimus I of Scythia, followed by Ammon of Thrace and Arabianus of Galatia. Palladius described the three of them as “metropolitans advanced in years” (“πάντων μητροπολιτῶν γεγηρακότων”).²⁸ This information proves that Theotimus I had the rank of metropolitan. Moreover, this rank does not seem to have been in any way inferior when compared to the other two metropolitans, who are actually mentioned by Palladius after the hierarch of Tomi.

The next pieces of information concern the years 430 and 431 and can be found in documents related to the First Council of Ephesus (431), where Scythia was represented by Timothy of Tomi (431).²⁹ The first evidence can be found in the list of signatures at the end of the protest letter addressed to Cyril of Alexandria (21 June 431). It contains 68 signatures, grouped according to the hierarchical criteria.³⁰ To be more precise, the metropolitans’ signatures are

27 See below, subchapter 2.4: ‘The church organization of Satrapiae and Inner Armenia (Great Armenia).’

28 Palladius, *Dialogus de vita sancti Johannis Chrysostomi* XIII (*Dialogue sur la vie de Jean Chrysostome*), 1, ed. Anne-Marie Malingrey, (Sources Chrétiennes) 341 (Paris: Cerf, 1988), p. 274¹⁵²⁻¹⁵⁵; *The Dialogue of Palladius concerning the Life of Chrysostom*, ed. Herbert-Moore, trans. W.K. Lowther Clarke, (Translations of Christian Literature. Series 1, Greek texts) (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; New York: Macmillan, 1921), p. 117. This information was first mentioned by Nelu Zugravu (“Studiu introductiv,” p. 91).

29 On the participation of Timothy of Tomi at the First Council of Ephesus (431), see Ionuț Holubeanu, “Urmările hotărârilor Sinodului al III-lea ecumenic (Efes, 431) asupra învățăturii soteriologice a Bisericii din provincia romană Scythia” [The First Council of Ephesus (431 CE) and the Soteriological Doctrine of the Church in the Roman Province of Scythia], *Pontica* 47 (2014), pp. 89–96, and below, subchapter 12.3.4: ‘The doctrine of salvation of the Scythian monks.’

30 Starting with the First Council of Ephesus, the conciliar lists were drawn up according to the hierarchical criterion, the metropolitan bishops being mentioned or signing in the first part of the lists and the suffragans in their final part—see Ernst Gerland and Vitalien Laurent, *Corpus notitiarum episcopatum ecclesiae orientalis Graecae. 1. Les listes conciliaires* (Istanbul: Socii Assumptionistae Chalcedonenses, 1936), p. 30; Evangelos Chrysos, *Die Bischofslisten des v. ökumenischen Konzils (553)* (Bonn: Habelt, 1966), pp. 151–152 and 156; Anna Crabbe, “The Invitation List to the Council of Ephesus and Metropolitan

in the first part of the list (nos. 1–21), whereas those of the suffragan bishops are in the second part (nos. 22–68).³¹ There is no exception from the designation of the hierarchical criterion in the list.³² Moreover, the case of Bishop Euprepus of Bizye proves the fact that signatories consciously respected this criterion. Euprepus signed the document twice: first, together with the metropolitans (no. 5), as an official representative of his metropolitan, and the second time, together with the suffragan bishops (no. 27), as one who belonged to this category.³³

The signature of Timothy of Tomi is placed approximately in the middle of the group of metropolitans (no. 15), being followed by six other signatures of metropolitans.³⁴ This shows that he also had this ecclesiastical rank, not being considered in any way inferior to the other metropolitans.

The second document from the First Council of Ephesus is the letter of Emperor Theodosius II (402/8–450) concerning the deposition of Nestorius of Constantinople, Cyril of Alexandria, and Memnon of Ephesus. The document was addressed to the hierarchs gathered at Ephesus toward the end of July—the beginning of August 431.³⁵ The names of several hierarchs (the addressees of the letter) are mentioned at the beginning of the document, without any specification of their episcopal sees.³⁶ Nevertheless, Pope Celestine, Rufus of Thessalonica, and Augustine of Hippo (†28 August 430) were identified among the addressees. However, none of them actually participated in the council. Most of the other addressees were identified with metropolitans of the time,

Hierarchy in the Fifth Century,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 32 (1981), no. 2, pp. 394–400; Hermann Josef Vogt, “Unterschiedliches Konzilsverständnis der Cyrillianer und der Orientalen beim Konzil von Efes 431,” in *Logos. Festschrift für Luise Abramowski*, ed. Hanns Christof Brennecke (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 1993), p. 431.

31 *ACO*, I/4, ed. Edward Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1922–1923), pp. 28¹¹–30³.

32 See Ionuț Holubeanu, *Organizarea bisericească în Scythia și Moesia Secunda în secolele IV–VII* [The Ecclesiastical Organization in Scythia and Moesia Secunda in the 4th–7th Centuries] (Bucharest: Basilica, 2018), pp. 320–325, annex 2.

33 *ACO*, I/4, p. 28^{15–16}; “*Fritillas episcopus Heracliae Europae per Euprepium episcopum Bizae subscripsi*” (“Phritillas bishop of Heraclea in Europa, I have signed through Euprepus bishop of Bizye”); p. 28³⁹; “*Euprepus episcopus Bizae Europae subscripsi*” (“Euprepus bishop of Bizye in Europa, I have signed”).

34 *ACO*, I/4, p. 28²⁶; “*Timotheus episcopus Scythiae subscripsi*” (“Timothy bishop of Scythia, I have signed”).

35 Gerland and Laurent, *Corpus notitiarum*, p. 41; Crabbe, “The Invitation List,” p. 369.

36 *ACO*, I/1.3, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1927), p. 31^{4–11} (the Greek version of the letter); *ACO*, I/3, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1929), pp. 11²⁸–11²⁴ (the Latin version).

either participant or absent from the council.³⁷ Based on this observation, it has been concluded that the imperial secretaries who sent the letter copied a number of names from the list of those invited to take part in the council, not knowing the names of the hierarchs who actually arrived in Ephesus.³⁸

On the other hand, the imperial letter (19 November 430) that summoned the bishops to the council shows that its direct addressees were the metropolitans. At the same time, they were asked to announce their suffragan bishops about the convocation of the council and, furthermore, to come to Ephesus together with some of them.³⁹ Therefore, suffragan bishops were only the indirect addressees of the official invitation.⁴⁰

The value of these observations resides in the fact that among the metropolitans invited at Ephesus, the name of a certain Timothy (Τιμοθέω/*Timotheo*) is found, identified with the hierarch of Tomi.⁴¹ In the imperial letter of July–August 431, his name appears in the position 45 (the Greek version of the letter)/44 (the Latin version) out of a total of 58/52 names.⁴² In the original form of the list with the hierarchs invited, reconstituted by Anna Crabbe, the name of Timothy can be found in the penultimate position, preceded by that of Metropolitan Dorotheus of Marcianopolis (Moesia Secunda) and followed by that of Metropolitan Basil of Larissa (Thessaly).⁴³

The document confirms that in November 430 the hierarch of Tomi was a direct addressee of the imperial letter of convocation to the council, as all the other metropolitans of the empire. Therefore, he was not suffragan to another metropolitan, but had himself this rank within the Church. Furthermore, the document certifies the recognition of his rank by the imperial chancellery.

37 See Gerland and Laurent, *Corpus notitiarum*, pp. 56 ff.; Crabbe, “The Invitation List,” pp. 371–377.

38 Gerland and Laurent, *Corpus notitiarum*, pp. 55–56; Crabbe, “The Invitation List,” p. 369.

39 *ACO*, I/1.1, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1927), p. 115^{23–26}; *ACO*, I/2, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1925–1926), p. 32^{13–15}.

40 Anna Crabbe also identified some names of suffragan bishops among those of metropolitans and she considers that they received personal invitations from the emperor due to their theological prestige—see Crabbe, “The Invitation List,” pp. 370 and 394. However, the inconsistent attitude of the hierarch of Tomi during the Nestorian crisis and at the First Council of Ephesus excludes the possibility for him to have been such a case—see Holubeanu, “Urmările hotărârilor,” pp. 89–96, and below subchapter 12.3.4: ‘The doctrine of salvation of the Scythian monks.’

41 Gerland and Laurent, *Corpus notitiarum*, pp. 56 and 65 (no. 52); Crabbe, “The Invitation List,” pp. 376 (no. 45) and 380 (no. 56).

42 *ACO*, I/1.3, p. 31¹⁰; *ACO*, I/3, p. 112³.

43 Crabbe, “The Invitation List,” p. 380.

The name of Timothy of Tomi also appears on two other lists of signatures of Ephesus (on 22 June and 22 July).⁴⁴ In both cases, however, the position of his signature is irrelevant for establishing his rank within the Church, as the hierarch of Tomi did not participate in those meetings of the council, only signed their decisions afterward.

There is another question that can be considered: Given the fact that the emperor had asked the metropolitans to come to Ephesus together with some of their suffragans, why did the hierarch of Tomi not observe the official demand? In fact, he was the only representative of the province of Scythia at the council.

First, it should be noted that Timothy was not the only metropolitan in this situation. A similar case was that of Senecio of Scodra, metropolitan of the province of Praevalitana. However, the case of the churches in Africa is much more relevant for the clarification of this issue. They were not represented at the council by any hierarch. The only participant from that part was deacon Bessulas, sent by Metropolitan Capreolus of Carthage. In a letter addressed to the participants to the council, the African metropolitan explained the reason for this mass absence of the African hierarchs, namely, the barbarian invasion.⁴⁵ His letter shows that the barbarian invasions were a real impediment to the hierarchs' participation in councils. Besides, the same explanation (the invasion of the Hun barbarians) has been proposed by scholars also in the case of the subsequent absence of all hierarchs of Moesia Secunda and that of Tomi from the Council of Chalcedon (451),⁴⁶ where a large number of participants was a record.

44 June 22: *ACO*, I/1.2, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1927), p. 62 (no. 172). July 22: *ACO*, I/1.7, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1929), p. 116 (no. 173); *ACO*, I/2, p. 74 (no. 170); *ACO*, I/3, p. 139 (no. 175); *ACO*, I/5.1, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1924–1925), p. 115²⁵ (no. 168).

45 *ACO*, I/1.2, pp. 52–54.

46 See Vitalien Laurent, "Note d'histoire ecclésiastique: La Scythie mineure fut-elle représentée au Concile de Chalcédoine?" *Études byzantines* 3 (1945), pp. 122–123; Ion Barnea, "Perioada Dominatului" [The Dominate], in Radu Vulpe and Ion Barnea, *Din istoria Dobrogei* [A History of Dobruja], 2 (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1968), p. 457; Andrew Poulter, *Nicopolis ad Istrum. A Roman, Late Roman and Early Byzantine City. Excavations 1985–1992*, (Journal of Roman Studies Monograph) 8 (London: Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, 1995), p. 36, n. 52; Nelu Zugravu, *Erezii și schisme la Dunărea Mijlocie și de Jos în mileniul I* [Heresies and Schisms on the Middle and Lower Danube in the First Millennium] (Iași: Presa Bună, 1999), p. 99; Liana Oța, "Hunii în Dobrogea" [The Huns in Dobruja], *Istros* x (2000), p. 370; Andrzej Bolesław Biernacki, "A City of Christians: Novae in the 5th and 6th C AD," *Archaeologia Bulgarica* 9 (2005), no. 1, p. 1.

The same reason could explain the absence of the hierarch of Chersonesus, as well as that of his neighbour from Bosphorus (ancient Panticapaeum, now Kerch, in Crimea-Ukraine) from Ephesus. In fact, there seems to be no relation between the absence/presence of the hierarchs of Chersonesus at the ecumenical councils of the 4th–6th centuries and their canonical dependence. They are attested at the First Council of Constantinople (381) and the Second Council of Ephesus (449), but were absent from the First Council of Nicaea (325), the First Council of Ephesus (431), the Council of Chalcedon (451), and the Second Council of Constantinople (553).⁴⁷ Those from Bosphorus were present at Nicaea (325) and Ephesus (449), but did not participate in Constantinople (381), Ephesus (431), Chalcedon (451), and Constantinople (553).⁴⁸ In a similar way, the hierarchs of Tomi are attested at Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381), and Ephesus (431) and were absent from Ephesus (449), Chalcedon (451), and Constantinople (553).⁴⁹ Therefore, it seems plausible that Timothy may have announced his suffragan bishops (whoever they were) about the call to the First Council of Ephesus, but they may have been unable to respond to the invitation because of various disorders or the presence of a barbarian invasion, or due to any other reason.

On the other hand, it should be noted that the names of the bishops of Chersonesus and Bosphorus in Crimea are absent from the list with the addressees of the Imperial letter of convocation to the First Council of Ephesus, although they had an active presence in the church life of the Eastern Roman Empire in the 5th and 6th centuries.⁵⁰ Their omission by the imperial chancellery of Constantinople suggests that their notification as to the convocation of the new council was at the discretion of the metropolitan under whose jurisdiction these hierarchs were placed.

The following hierarch of Tomi, Alexander (c.449–c.452), is also mentioned in a hierarchical list: in the list of attendees at the hearing in Constantinople on 13 April 449.⁵¹ The hearing was held at the behest of Eutyches' supporters

47 See below, subchapter 6.4: 'The see of Chersonesus.' Mention was made here also of the Second Council of Ephesus (the Robber Council, 449) because it was intended to be an ecumenical council.

48 See below, subchapter 6.5: 'The see of Bosphorus.'

49 See above, 'Introduction.'

50 Crabbe, "The Invitation List," pp. 382–385.

51 *ACO*, II/1.1, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1933), pp. 148⁴–149²⁰ (the Greek version of the list); *ACO*, II/2.1, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1932), p. 56^{10–20} (the Latin incomplete version). See also Holubeanu, *Organizarea*, pp. 333–336, annex 5.

who had denounced the erroneous recording in documents of the debates of the Home Synod of 448, when Eutyches had been condemned as a heretic.

It is obvious in this case, as well, that those in charge of the attendance list observed the distinction between metropolitans and suffragan bishops. Flavian (446–449), the archbishop of Constantinople, was mentioned in the first position, followed by the patrician and ex-prefect Florentius. Then comes the group of metropolitans (nos. 3–8) and that of suffragan bishops (nos. 9–35). At the end of the list, Mamas, the count and first secretary of the divine office of complaints and divine investigations, is mentioned. The only exception to the hierarchical criterion is the case of Metropolitan Candidianus of Antioch in Pisidia, mentioned among the suffragan bishops (no. 26).⁵² The last hierarch of the group of suffragan bishops is Aurelius of Hadrumentum, a bishop from the African province Byzacena, settled in Constantinople.⁵³

Alexander of Tomi is mentioned in the penultimate position (no. 7) of the group of metropolitans, followed by Marinianus of Synnada, the metropolitan of Phrygia Salutaris.⁵⁴ His position in the attendance list suggests his rank of metropolitan.

Alexander of Tomi also approved the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon (451).⁵⁵ But in this case, his signature is irrelevant in establishing his rank within the Church, as he did not take part in the council, but only signed the decrees afterward.⁵⁶

52 ACO, II/1.1, p. 149⁵⁻⁶. Speaking about an attendance list, this exception may be due to Candidianus' delayed arrival at the hearing in Constantinople. Such a situation is known also at the Home Synod of 400, where Bishop Eusebius of Valentinopolis arrived with a delay (see Palladius, *Dialogus de vita sancti Johannis Chrysostomi* XIII, p. 274¹⁵⁶⁻¹⁶²; trans., pp. 117–118).

53 In the provinces of Africa, the metropolitan rank (primate of the province) was dependent not on the see but on seniority—see Chrysos, *Die Bischofslisten*, pp. 173–174. Taking into account the fact that Aurelius lived in Constantinople at the time, it is less probable for him to have been the primate of the province of Byzacena.

54 ACO, II/1.1, p. 148¹²: “Ἀλεξάνδρου τοῦ εὐλαβεστάτου ἐπισκόπου τῆς Τομέων πόλεως ἐπαρχίας Σκυθίας” (“Alexander the most devout bishop of the city of Tomi in the province of Scythia”); ACO, II/2.1, p. 56¹⁶: “*Alexandro Tomeno prouinciae Scythiae*” (“Alexander of Tomi in the province of Scythia”).

55 ACO, II/3.2, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1936), p. 78²⁴ (no. 183).

56 See Laurent, “Note d’histoire ecclésiastique,” pp. 115–123. On the reconstitution of Alexander’s signature on the documents of Chalcedon, see Venance Grumel, “Note sur « pagas(s)enae civitatis »,” *Études byzantines* 3 (1945), pp. 124–126.

2.2.2 *The Encyclia (457–458) of Emperor Leo I*

The generic term *Encyclia* denotes an investigation (as well as its results) on religious issues. It was started by Emperor Leo I.⁵⁷ He asked the hierarchs of the empire to express their opinion on three major topics: 1. The necessity to convoke a new ecumenical council; 2. The validity of the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon (451); 3. The canonicity of the election of Timothy Ailuros (457–460; 475–477) as archbishop of Alexandria in Egypt.⁵⁸

The direct addressees of the imperial letter were the pope, the metropolitans from most of the Eastern provinces of the empire, three ordinary bishops (Julian of Cos in the Islands, Julian of Tavium in Galatia Prima, and Adelphius of Arabissus in Armenia Secunda), and three renowned ascetics (Symeon Stylites, John of Cyrrhus, and Baradates).⁵⁹ The hierarchs of Egypt and those in the provinces of Praevalitana, Moesia Prima, and Dacia Ripensis were not consulted.⁶⁰

57 On *Encyclia*, see Eduard Schwartz, “Praefatio,” in *ACO*, II/5, pp. XII–XVI; Theodor Schnitzler, *Im Kampfe um Chalcedon. Geschichte und Inhalt des Codex Encyclius von 458*, (Analecta Gregoriana) 16 (Rome: Apud aedes Universitatis Gregoriana, 1938); Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, II/1, trans. Pauline Allen and John Cawte (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987), pp. 195–235; Gereon Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I. Das oströmische Reich in den ersten drei Jahren seiner Regierung (457–460 n.Chr.)* (Berlin/New York: De Gruyter, 2010), pp. 345–431 and 826–837; Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil, *Crisis Management in Late Antiquity (410–590 CE). A Survey of the Evidence from Episcopal Letters*, (Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae*) 121 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2013), pp. 130–137.

58 *ACO*, II/5, p. 11^{5–34}.

59 The list with the addressees of the imperial letter is published in *ACO*, II/5, pp. 22^{32–24}²⁸; see also Holubeanu, *Organizarea*, pp. 343–348, annex 7. The direct questioning of Julian of Cos is due to his role as a papal representative. Julian of Tavium and Adelphius of Arabissus have been considered ordinary bishops by most of the scholars, even if they had been direct addressees of the emperor—see Heinrich Gelzer, “Zur Zeitbestimmung der griechischen Notitiae Episcopatum,” *Jahrbücher für protestantische Theologie* 12 (1886), no. 3, p. 343; Ernst Honigmann, *Patristic Studies*, (Studi e Testi) 173 (Vatican: Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1953), p. 177; Chrysos, “Zur Entstehung,” p. 278, n. 76; Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I*, pp. 521–522, 826 (n. 5), and 827 (n. 12); Allen and Neil, *Crisis Management*, p. 132. Only Eduard Schwartz considered them titular metropolitans—see Schwartz, “Praefatio,” p. XIII.

60 According to scholars, the fact that the hierarchs of these provinces of Illyricum were not consulted was due to the lack of organization caused by the Huns' attacks in the region—see Jacques Zeiller, *Les origines chrétiennes dans les provinces danubiennes de l'empire romain* (Paris: De Boccard, 1918), p. 361; Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I*, pp. 358 and 827 (n. 14); Allen and Neil, *Crisis Management*, p. 133.

Unlike the metropolitans, ordinary bishops were, for the most part, indirect addressees of the inquiry. In his questionnaire letter, the emperor asked every metropolitan to call the provincial synod in order to inform their suffragan bishops about the issues he raised, analyze them together, and then write a common answer.⁶¹

The investigation was launched in the middle or in the second half of October 457, and was carried out as a matter of urgency, mainly during the winter of 457–458.⁶² The only response letters where the sender's date was preserved are from the pope (1 December 457) and Baradates (27 August 458), the latter sent with great delay, however.⁶³

The response letters, as well as other documents concerning the issues of the investigation, were gathered in Constantinople and published before the end of the year 459 in a collection known as *Encyclia* (τὰ Ἐγκύκλια) or *Codex Encyclicus*.⁶⁴ It was partially preserved in the Latin translation of Epiphanius Scholasticus.⁶⁵ Parts of the letters were found in other works, as well, written in Greek, Latin, and Syrian languages.⁶⁶ Several responses have been entirely lost.⁶⁷

61 *ACO*, II/5, p. 11^{21–23}. See also Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, pp. 196–197; Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I*, pp. 349–350 and 359.

62 On the haste of the investigation, see *ACO*, II/5, pp. 11^{21–23}, 28–29, 39^{7–8}, and 64^{32–34}. For scholarly views on this aspect, see Schnitzler, *Im Kampfe um Chalcedon*, pp. 21–22; Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, pp. 196–197; Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I*, pp. 359–360, n. 329.

63 For the date of Pope Leo I's response letter, see *ACO*, II/4, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1932), p. 104¹⁹; *ACO*, II/5, p. 24^{29–30}. For the date of Baradates' response letter and the delay of its expedition, see *ACO*, II/5, p. 38^{8–9}, 25–26. Based on certain allusions to the results of the inquiry, exposed in a letter of Pope Leo I on 1 March 458, Theodor Schnitzler stated that the preliminary results of the Imperial investigation were already known at that time—see Schnitzler, *Im Kampfe um Chalcedon*, p. 23. On the period of the investigation and on the difficulties encountered by hierarchs because of the harshness of winter, see also Schwartz, "Praefatio," p. XII; Schnitzler, *Im Kampfe um Chalcedon*, pp. 19–20, 22–23, and 34–35; Honigmann, *Patristic Studies*, p. 184; Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I*, pp. 357, 359–360, and 392.

64 Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I*, p. 835.

65 Epiphanius Scholasticus translated *Encyclia* from Greek to Latin around the year 555 (Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I*, pp. 833–834), on Cassiodorus' request (see Cassiodorus, *De institutione divinarum litterarum* XI, PL 70:1123). The text of his translation was partially preserved in *Collectio Sangermanensis*, published in a critical edition by Eduard Schwartz (*ACO*, II/5, pp. 3–98).

66 See Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, pp. 198–199.

67 According to Gereon Siebigs' calculations, the part that was preserved from *Encyclia* contains approximately 60 per cent of the response letters—see Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I*, pp. 826–827.

Theotimus II of Tomi was a direct addressee of the imperial letter, like the other metropolitans.⁶⁸ No suffragan bishop is named in the response letter sent by him, however. Certain scholars have interpreted these aspects as proof of the fact that his rank was that of autocephalous archbishop (titular metropolitan).⁶⁹

Encyclia raises several interpretation issues on Scythia and the see of Tomi. The most delicate one of them does not concern the letter of Theotimus II, but a term of the letter sent by the bishops of Moesia Secunda. The names of six senders appear in the greeting formula of this last-mentioned letter: Marcian, Martialis, Minofilus, Marcellus, Peter, and Dizas, who called themselves ‘*episcopi secundae Mysiae*’ (‘bishops in Moesia Secunda’).⁷⁰ They are the bishops of those times in Abritus, Appiaria, Durostorum, Nicopolis ad Istrum, Novae, and Odessos, respectively.⁷¹ Issues of interpretation are raised by the signature belonging to the bishop of Odessos (now Varna, Bulgaria): ‘*Dizza episcopus ciuitatis Odissae Scythiae similiter*’ (“Dizza bishop of the city of Odessos in Scythia, similarly”).⁷² The problem is the meaning of the term ‘*Scythiae*,’ which is the genitive singular form of the name ‘*Scythia*’ (‘of Scythia/belonging to Scythia/in Scythia’).

Most scholars who considered the see of Odessos as a suffragan bishopric of the metropolis of Marcianopolis (Moesia Secunda), either overlooked this

68 For the metropolitans who were direct addressees of the imperial letter, see *ACO*, II/5, pp. 11⁶, 33–34, 22^{25–26}, 24²⁸, and 25^{8–10}.

69 Gelzer, “Zur Zeitbestimmung,” p. 342; Dimitŭr Ťsuhlev, *Istoriŭa na Bŭlgarskata Ťsŭrkva* [History of the Bulgarian Church], 1 (Sofia, 1911), 111.e. Available at http://www.pravosla.vieto.com/history/BPC_history_864-1186_Tsuhlev.htm. Accessed 2022 May 9; Emilian Popescu, “Contributions à la géographie historique de la Péninsule Balkanique aux v^e–viii^e siècles,” *Dacia* [N.S.] 13 (1969), pp. 409 and 414–415; Popescu, *Christianitas Daco-Romana*, pp. 128 and 154; Chrysos, “Zur Entstehung,” pp. 267 (n. 14) and 277–278; Bistra Nikolova, “The Church of Odessos-Varna between Byzantium, the Bulgarian Tsardom and the Patriarchate of Constantinople,” *Études Balkaniques* 34 (1998), nos. 1–2, p. 94; Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I*, pp. 521–522, 826 (n. 5), and 827. Eduard Schwartz considers him a metropolitan, without other remarks (Schwartz, “Praefatio,” p. XIII). Nelu Zugravu also admits his rank as a metropolitan, without other details (Zugravu, “Studiu introductiv,” p. 91).

70 *ACO*, II/5, p. 32^{1–2}.

71 *ACO*, II/5, p. 32^{26–31}.

72 *ACO*, II/5, p. 32³¹.

term,⁷³ or considered it a mistake in the document.⁷⁴ Others either tacitly excluded the possibility that it may have been added to the text,⁷⁵ or expressed their perplexity as to its presence in Dizas' signature,⁷⁶ or openly admitted that they did not know what it meant.⁷⁷

- 73 See Johann Elieser Theodor Wiltsch, *Handbuch der kirchlichen Geographie und Statistik von den Zeiten der Apostel bis zu dem Anfange des sechzehnten Jahrhunderts: mit besonderer Rücksicht auf die Ausbreitung des Judenthums und Mohammedanismus*, 1 (Berlin: Schultz, 1846), pp. 174–175; Johann Elieser Theodor Wiltsch, *Handbook of the Geography and Statistics of the Church*, 1, trans. John Leitch (London: Bosworth & Harrison, 1859), p. 185; Vasile Pârvan, *Contribuții epigrafice la istoria creștinismului daco-roman* [Epigraphic Contributions to the History of Daco-Roman Christianity] (Bucharest: SOCEC & Co., 1911), pp. 58–59 and 72 (n. 346); Тсукхлев, *Istoriā*, III.Д–е; Raymund Netzhammer, *Die christlichen Altertümer der Dobrudscha* (Bucharest: SOCEC & Co., 1918), p. 56; Zeiller, *Les origines*, pp. 165, 361–362, and 600; Carol Auner, “Dobrogea” [Dobruja], in *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie chrétienne et de Liturgie*, IV/1, eds. Fernand Cabrol and Henri Leclercq (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1920), col. 1247; Henri Leclercq, “Mésie,” in *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie chrétienne et de Liturgie*, XI/1, eds. Fernand Cabrol and Henri Leclercq (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1933), col. 507; Schnitzler, *Im Kampfe um Chalcedon*, pp. 39 (n. 29), 100, and 102; Raymond Janin, “La hiérarchie ecclésiastique dans le diocèse de Thrace,” *Revue des études byzantines* 17 (1959), pp. 139–141; Alexander Minchev, “Rannoto khristiianstvo v Odesos i okolnostite mu” [Early Christianity in and around Odessos], *Izvestiia na narodniia muzei Varna* 22 (1986), p. 32; Giorgio Fedalto, *Hierarchia Ecclesiastica Orientalis*, 1 (Padova: Edizioni Messaggero, 1988), p. 348; Biernacki, “A City of Christians,” p. 1; Atanasov, *Khristiianskiut Durostorum*, pp. 88–89; Atanassov, “Christianity,” pp. 359 and 361.
- 74 See Michael Le Quien, *Oriens christianus*, 1 (Paris: Ex typographia regia, 1740), col. 1225; Lili Gajdova, “Zum Problem über die Einbeziehung der Odesser Kirchengemeinde in die Rangliste der autokephalen Archiepiskopate,” *Pulpudeva* 4 (1983), p. 298; Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I*, pp. 358–359 (n. 324) and 834–835 (n. 42 and 43) (as a first hypothesis); Kazimierz Iłski, *Biskupi Mezji i Scytii IV–VI w.* [The Bishops of Moesia and Scythia: 4th–6th Centuries], (Moesia II et Scythia Minor) 2 (Prosopographia Moesiaca) 5 (Poznań: VTS, 1995), p. 21 (as a second hypothesis). Gereon Siebigs considered that the explanation provided by Ernst Honigmann for the added term ‘*Euphratisiae*,’ found at the end of the letter from the province Syria Secunda (see below), also goes for the term ‘*Scythiae*.’
- 75 We speak about Eduard Schwartz and Ernst Honigmann. Both attempted their own explanations in the case of the two additions from *Encyclica* (‘*Euphratisiae*’ and ‘*per secundae Syriae*’) (see below), but refrained from any remark concerning ‘*Scythiae*’—see Schwartz, “Praefatio,” p. xv; *ACO*, II/5, p. 40 (*apparatus* 7), 38 (*apparatus* 29), and 32 (*apparatus* 31); Honigmann, *Patristic Studies*, pp. 97 and 169–173.
- 76 Zugravu, “Studiu introductiv,” p. 122. In the same study, Zugravu identified Dizas as a bishop in Moesia Secunda, suffragan of the metropolitan of Marcianopolis (pp. 93 and 121–122).
- 77 Chrysos, “Zur Entstehung,” p. 266. However, Chrysos considered Dizas as a suffragan of the metropolitan of Marcianopolis, excluding any relation between the see of Odessos and the province of Scythia. In fact, Chrysos' priority was to reject Ernst Gerland' thesis,

The form of Dizas' signature, as well as its place (the last) among the other signatures, made Heinrich Gelzer suppose a special position of the hierarch of Odessos among the suffragans of Marcianopolis.⁷⁸

Ernst Gerland considered three aspects: 1. Scythia was not an ecclesiastical province, but only a civil one; 2. In the church organization plan, the entire Scythia was part of the ecclesiastical province of Moesia Secunda; 3. At that time (458), both the episcopal see of Tomi and that of Odessos were autocephalous archbishoprics within the ecclesiastical province of Moesia Secunda. Based on these observations, Gerland concluded that by the term '*Scythiae*,' the hierarch of Odessos wished to emphasize his independence from the metropolis of Marcianopolis, a case similar to that of Tomi, in the civil province of Scythia.⁷⁹

Gereon Siebigs, admitting (as a second hypothesis) that the term '*Scythiae*' may have been part of Dizas' original signature, drew the conclusion that the borders between Moesia Secunda and Scythia had been modified by that time; the city of Odessos being integrated into Scythia.⁸⁰

Aloys Grillmeier, analyzing the points of view of the bishops in *Encyclia* regarding the Council of Chalcedon, stated that the epistle from Moesia Secunda (no. 19 in *Codex Encyclius*) contains the point of view of hierarchs from two provinces, namely Moesia Secunda and Scythia.⁸¹ Although Grillmeier did not provide other explanations, this statement shows that he considered Dizas as a bishop of Scythia, not of Moesia Secunda.

Finally, Kazimierz Iłski considered (as a first hypothesis) that Odessos was a city situated on the territory of the civil province of Moesia Secunda, but that its bishopric was part of the ecclesiastical province of Scythia. Therefore,

that the see of Odessos already had the rank of autocephalous archbishopric at that time. Gerland based his idea on the term '*Scythiae*.'

78 Gelzer, "Zur Zeitbestimmung," p. 342. A similar point of view is that of Bistra Nikolova ("The Church of Odessos," pp. 94–95 and 97).

79 Ernst Gerland, "Rezension: J. Weiss, *Die Dobrudscha im Altertum*," *Berliner Philologische Wochenschrift* 32 (1912), no. 30, col. 946–947. Subsequently, Evangelos Chrysos proved that the see of Odessos had the rank of ordinary bishopric at that time (Chrysos, "Zur Entstehung," pp. 266–267). On the evolution of the rank of the bishopric of Odessos, see below, subchapter 5: 'The historical stages of the see of Odessos from ordinary bishopric in Scythia to great metropolis of Moesia Secunda.'

80 Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I*, pp. 627–629. Similarly, Dan Ruscu, "Review for 'Ionuț Holubeanu, *Organizarea bisericească în Scythia și Moesia Secunda în secolele IV–VII*," Editura Basilica, București, 2018, 462 pp., ISBN: 978-606-29-0223-0," *Classica et Christiana* 18 (2023), no. 2, p. 569.

81 Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, p. 211: "Only one group of bishops, those from *secunda Mysia* and *Scythia* (C[odex] E[ncyclius] [letter no.] 19), is an exception."

the hierarch of Odessos was a suffragan of the metropolitan of Tomi, and not of Marcianopolis. Based on the information in *Notitiae episcopatumum*, where Odessos is registered in the province of Moesia, Ilski concluded that the see was transferred to Moesia Secunda after the moment of *Encyclia*. In his opinion, this process was already underway in 458.⁸²

We would like to point out, first of all, that the term ‘*Scythiae*’ appears in both manuscripts (*Parisinus Latinus* 12098 and *Vindobonensis* 397) where the text of the *Encyclia* has been preserved. Moreover, it appears in both documents with the same form (‘*Scythiae*’),⁸³ which indicates that the term had also existed in the source of the two manuscripts. In what concerns its place, it can be found inside the signature of the hierarch of Odessos, before the term ‘*similiter*’ (‘similarly’). This placing makes the case ‘*Scythiae*’ different from the additions found in the content of the other two letters from *Encyclia*. The first of these is the term ‘*Euphratisiae*’ (‘of [the province of] Euphratensis/belonging to Euphratensis/in Euphratensis’) at the end of the letter from Syria Secunda, placed between ‘*similiter*’, at the end of the last signature, and ‘*explicit*’ (‘the end’), which marks the end of the letter.⁸⁴ The presence of this term was explained by the fact that, taking the letter from the province of Euphratensis out of the codex, Cassiodorus marked the place where he was to place it after use (which never happened).⁸⁵ The second addition is the wording ‘*per secundae Syriae*’ (‘in Syria Secunda’), placed between the last phrase of Baradates’ letter and the term ‘*explicit*’.⁸⁶ Eduard Schwartz considered that these words indicated the following letter of the codex (that of Syria Secunda),⁸⁷ while Ernst Honigmann considered that it indicated the province where Baradates lived at that time.⁸⁸ The different position of ‘*Scythiae*’ shows that this case is

82 Kazimierz Ilski, “Korespondencja biskupów Mezyjskich” [The Correspondence of the Moesian Bishops], in *Studia Moesiaca*, eds. Leszek Mrozewicz and Kazimierz Ilski (Poznań: VIS, 1994), pp. 132–134; Ilski, *Biskupi Mezji i Scytii*, p. 21.

83 *ACO*, II/5, p. 32, *apparatus* 31.

84 *ACO*, II/5, p. 40⁷: “*Magnus episcopus Mariammae similiter. Euphratisiae EXPLICIT*” (“Magnus bishop of Mariamma, similarly. of Euphratensis THE END”).

85 Honigmann, *Patristic Studies*, pp. 169–173. Similarly, Schwartz, “Praefatio,” p. XV; *ACO*, II/5, p. 40 (*apparatus* 7).

86 *ACO*, II/5, p. 38^{26–29}: “*saluto uestram diuinitatem et omnes diligentes tranquillitatem uestram et deprecor omnipotentem deum ut statuatur uestrum imperium longaeuis in hoc mundo temporibus et in futuro saeculo coram deo. per secundae Syriae EXPLICIT*” (I wish good health to your divinity and to all that love your serenity and I pray to Almighty God to keep your empire a long time in this world and in the age to come before God. In Syria Secunda THE END).

87 *ACO*, II/5, p. 38 (*apparatus* 29).

88 Honigmann, *Patristic Studies*, p. 97.

different from ‘*Euphratisiae*’ and ‘*per secundae Syriae*.’ Moreover, both Eduard Schwartz and Ernst Honigmann, who provided explanations for the other two additions, avoided giving their opinion on the meaning of ‘*Scythiae*.’⁸⁹

Furthermore, between the hierarch of Odessos’ signature and the term ‘*explicit*’ (‘the end’), written at the end of all the epistles of *Encyclia*, there is a mention of Epiphanius Scholasticus, in which he informs his readers that the letter from Moesia Secunda was written in Latin, then translated into Greek in Constantinople, and then translated again by himself into Latin.⁹⁰ This phrase of Epiphanius has the value of a seal, indicating the end of the letter from Moesia Secunda in the Greek manuscript of *Encyclia* that he used in 555. If ‘*Scythiae*’ had been added after translating the letter from Greek into Latin, then it would have appeared after Epiphanius’ phrase. This shows that the term existed in the Greek manuscript used by Epiphanius in 555 and it was part of the hierarch of Odessos’ signature.

In what concerns its meaning, the most plausible explanation seems to be the one provided by Kazimierz Iłski. Considering the fact that ecclesiastical Scythia included toward the north territories from the Crimean Peninsula (Chersonesus), situated outside the limits of the Roman Scythia, it is possible for it to have extended also toward the south, beyond its borders. Odessos was actually the closest episcopal centre situated south of Tomi, and its past had been related to that of the Scythian metropolis in the period of the 2nd–3rd centuries AD. A Greek political alliance existed on the Western coast of the Black Sea in those times, known as the Pontic community (κοινὸν Πόντου, κοινὸν τῶν Ἑλλήνων), which included five (at some point even six) of the sea coast cities in this area: Tomi (headquarters of the community, as well), Histria, Callatis, Dionysopolis, and Odessos. Of these, only Odessos remained outside the Roman province of Scythia after its creation. The jurisdiction of the see of Tomi may have been extended also over Odessos before the creation of Scythia, as it had also covered the other cities included in the province. On the other hand, mention must be made of the fact that territories of Crimea controlled by the Roman Empire were associated with the diocese of Thrace within the military organization plan. As it has already been shown (see ‘Introduction’), troops of legion II Herculia of Scythia were sent to Chersonesus

89 See above, n. 75.

90 ACO, II/5, p. 32^{31–33}: “*Dizza episcopus ciuitatis Odissae Scythiae similiter / Et haec Latine quidem data est in Graeco interpretata et iterum translata de Graeco in Latinum. EXPLICIT*” (“Dizza bishop of the city of Odessos in Scythia, similarly / And this [epistle], which was actually sent in Latin, was translated into Greek and then again from Greek into Latin. THE END”).

during the Tetrarchy to defend this city.⁹¹ All these regional (administrative, military, and, possibly, ecclesiastical) aspects of the past may have inspired the establishment of the geographical extent of the ecclesiastical province of Scythia (with Chersonesus and Odessos) at the moment of its organization.

The fact that Odessos had a double affiliation (civil and ecclesiastical) in 457–458 is also indicated by the position of Bishop Dizas within the letter in *Encyclia*. In the greeting phrase, he presented himself, together with the other hierarchs, as being a bishop of Moesia Secunda, meaning the civil province, not the ecclesiastical one. When he signed the document, he wanted to specify that, within the church organization plan, his episcopal see was part of Scythia, not of Moesia Secunda.

The strong ecclesiastical relations existing between Tomi and Odessos during Late Antiquity are also confirmed by the discovery at Tomi of the tombstone of Marcellus, a vicar of the bishop of Odessos (6th century).⁹²

Interpretation issues have also been raised by certain aspects of the response letter of Theotimus II of Tomi addressed to Emperor Leo I. Each aspect will be presented and analysed hereafter. Certain scholars have focused on the term ‘*regio*’ (‘region’) used by Theotimus II in the greeting formula of his letter: “*Domino piissimo et Christianissimo imperatori nostro Leoni Theotimus humilis Scythiae regionis episcopus*” (“Theotimus the humble bishop of the region of Scythia to the most pious and most Christian lord, our Emperor Leo”).⁹³ The use of this term, and not of ‘*provincia*’/‘ἐπαρχία’ (‘province’), led to the

91 Emilian Popescu, *Inscriptiile grecești și latine din secolele IV–XIII descoperite în România* [The Greek and Latin Inscriptions from the 4th to 13th Centuries Discovered in Romania] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1976), pp. 35 and 147; Alexandru Suceveanu, “La Dobroudja aux I^{er}–III^e siècles n.è.” in Alexandru Suceveanu and Alexandru Barnea, *La Dobroudja Romaine* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1991), p. 133; Mihail Zahariade, *Scythia Minor. A History of a Later Roman Province (284–681)* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 2006), p. 164; Ionuț Holubeanu, “Dependența canonică a Tomisului în secolul al IV-lea” [The Ecclesiastical Subordination of the Bishopric of Tomis in the 4th Century AD], in *Cruce și misiune. Sfinții Împărați Constantin și Elena—promotori ai libertății religioase și apărători ai Bisericii*, 2, eds. Emilian Popescu and Viorel Ioniță (Bucharest: Basilica, 2013), pp. 647–648; Alexandru Madgearu, “Expansiunea și decăderea puterii romane în bazinul Mării Negre” [The Expansion and Decline of the Roman Power in the Black Sea Basin], in *Marea Neagră. State și frontiere, de la sfârșitul Antichității la Pacea de la Paris (1856)*, eds. Sergiu Iosipescu, Alexandru Madgearu, and Mircea Soreanu (Bucharest: Editura Militară, 2013), pp. 41–43.

92 Ionuț Holubeanu, “Din nou despre ‘vicarul odesitan Marcellus’” [Some Remarks on the Funerary Stele of the Odessitan Vicarius Marcellus (6th c. AD)], in *Omagiu profesorului Emilian Popescu la 90 de ani*, eds. Varlaam [Merticariu] and Emanoil Băbuș (Bucharest: Basilica, 2020), pp. 361–377.

93 *ACO*, II/5, p. 31^{12–13}.

conclusion that Scythia had lost the status of province of the empire.⁹⁴ Gereon Siebigs incorrectly stated that Theotimus is the only hierarch of the whole *Encyclia* who used this term when referring to his territory or jurisdiction.⁹⁵

'*Regio*' is most probably the translation of the Greek term 'χώρα'.⁹⁶ Siebigs did not exclude the possibility for the hierarch of Tomi to have written his letter in Latin.⁹⁷ Whatever the case, his letter must have been translated into Greek in Constantinople and subsequently turned again into Latin by Epiphanius Scholasticus, who showed much precision in his translation work.⁹⁸ In fact, the term '*regio*' also appears in the greeting formulas of four other letters in *Encyclia* (those of Mesopotamia, Pamphylia, Hellespontus, and Paphlagonia).⁹⁹ On the other hand, the hierarchs in Hellespontus, citing canon 4 of the First Council of Nicaea in their letter, also used the term '*provincia*' ('ἐπαρχία').¹⁰⁰ Nevertheless, the case of the metropolitan of Paphlagonia is essential for a perfect understanding of the meaning of '*regio*.' Even if he used twice the term '*regio*' within the letter composed together with his colleagues, he made use of the term '*provincia*' ('ἐπαρχία') to refer to his ecclesiastical province in the final observations that accompanied his signature.¹⁰¹ These aspects lead to the conclusion that at least some of the hierarchs of those times considered the two terms as synonymous. The same use of the two terms can also be found in other documents (ecclesiastical and civil) of the 5th and 6th centuries.¹⁰²

94 Otto J. Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns: Studies in Their History and Culture* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1973), p. 159, n. 792; Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I*, pp. 358–359, n. 324.

95 Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I*, pp. 358–359, n. 324.

96 See Chrēstou M. Adamantiou, *Lexikon Ellēno-Latinikon* (Athens: Phexē, 1908), p. 650.

97 Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I*, p. 828, n. 15.

98 See Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I*, p. 826.

99 *ACO*, II/5, p. 41¹²: '*Mesopotamiae regionis*,' *ACO*, II/5, p. 58⁴: '*Pamphyliae regionis*,' *ACO*, II/5, p. 67⁴: '*Hellispontinae regionis*,' *ACO*, II/5, p. 86¹⁰: '*Paphlagoniae regionis*.' Hierarchs of Paphlagonia used the term also within the letter: '*episcopi Paphlagoniae regionis*' (*ACO*, II/5, p. 86^{24–25}).

100 *ACO*, II/5, p. 67³⁹. Moreover, '*provincia*' is the term used in the Latin translation of the canon—see Tanner, *Decrees*, p. 7.

101 *ACO*, II/5, p. 87^{31–32}: '*episcopis nostrae prouinciae*.'

102 See, for example, documents of the Home Synod of 518 [*ACO*, III, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1940), pp. 65^{18–19} and 66^{13–14, 17–18}] or *Novellae* 24–31 issued by emperor Justinian I [*Corpus Iuris Civilis* (hereafter cited as *CIC*), 3, ed. Rudolf Schöll (Berlin: Weidmannos, 1912), pp. 189–239; *The Novels of Justinian*, trans. Samuel P. Scott (Cincinnati, 1932). Available at https://droitromain.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/Anglica/Novellae_Scott.htm. Accessed 2022 May 10]. For the use of 'χώρα/*regio*' as a synonym of 'ἐπαρχία/*provincia*' in the 5th and 6th centuries, see also Heinz Ohme, "Der Terminus „χώρα“ als „Provinzbezeichnung“ in synodalen Bischofslisten des 6.–8. Jahrhunderts," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 82 (1989), pp. 196–198 and 200–201.

Another observation points to the fact that Theotimus does not refer to himself as having the rank of a metropolitan, but that of a bishop.¹⁰³ The correct understanding of this aspect can be reached by analysing the terminology used by the other hierarchs in their epistles. Thus, only in four out of 31 response letters preserved there is a reference to the rank within the Church in the greeting phrase. More precisely, the term *'archiepiscopus'* ('archbishop')¹⁰⁴ appears in one case, the phrase *'metropolitanus episcopus'* ('metropolitan bishop')¹⁰⁵ in another, and two other cases mention the rank of metropolis of the residence city.¹⁰⁶ On the other hand, seven metropolitans individually recommended themselves as *'episcopus'* ('bishop')¹⁰⁷ and 17 only mentioned their names, either alone,¹⁰⁸ or together with those of their suffragan bishops, presenting themselves together with them, without any other distinction, as *'episcopi'* ('bishops').¹⁰⁹ In three other letters, the synod of the province is

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- 103 See Zugravu, "Studiu introductiv," p. 91. Nelu Zugravu and Ioan Iațcu refer to the 'signature' of Theotimus II—see Ioan Iațcu, *Construcții religioase creștine în provincia Scythia: secolele IV–VI p.Chr.* [Christian Religious Constructions in the Province of Scythia: The 4th–6th Centuries AD] (Brăila: Istros, 2012), pp. 28–29. In fact, it is about the phrase *'Theotimus humilis Scythiae episcopus'* from the greeting part of his letter. Theotimus' signature was not preserved in *Encyclia*.
- 104 The metropolitan of Dyrrachium (Epirus Nova): *'Lucas archiepiscopus'*, but with the signature: *'Lucas episcopus Dyrrachenus'* (ACO, II/5, pp. 95¹⁶ and 96²⁸).
- 105 The titular metropolitan of Bizye (Europa): *'Lucianus humilis Byzae metropolitanus episcopus'* ('Lucian the humble metropolitan bishop of Bizye') (ACO, II/5, p. 28^{17–18}). His signature was not preserved.
- 106 ACO, II/5, p. 51²: *'Pergamius episcopus Antiochiae Pisidiae metropolis'* ('Pergamius bishop of Antioch the metropolis of Pisidia'); ACO, II/5, p. 88³²: *'Petrus episcopus metropolis Corinthi'* ('Peter bishop of Corinth the metropolis'). These hierarchs can be considered to have given their title of metropolitans, as in those times the metropolitan rank was most often indicated by the mention of the status of metropolis of the residence city. Epiphanius Scholasticus most probably translated literally from Greek into Latin the titles used by the hierarchs.
- 107 ACO, II/5, p. 75^{22–23}: *'Alypius episcopus Caesareae Cappadociae'* ('Alypius bishop of Caesarea in Cappadocia'). Similarly: ACO, II/5, pp. 26²⁰, 30¹¹, 58^{1–2}, 63^{38–39}, 93¹⁸, and 96^{37–38}.
- 108 The case of the metropolitan of Philippopolis (Thrace): *'humilis Valentio'* ('humble Valentius') (ACO, II/5, p. 28³⁸). His signature shows his rank of metropolitan, though: *'Valentinus (sic!) episcopus Philippopolitanae metropolis sanctissimae ecclesiae'* ("Valentinus bishop of the most holy Church of Philippopolis the metropolis") (ACO, II/5, p. 30⁶).
- 109 ACO, II/5, p. 32^{35–36}: *'Basilius Maximus Theoctistus Domnus Gerontius Flavianus Sabas Cyrus et Petrus episcopi primae Syriae'* ("Basil, Maximus, Theoctistus, Domnus, Gerontius, Flavian, Sabas, Cyrus, and Peter bishops in Syria Prima"). Similarly: ACO, II/5, pp. 40^{9–10}, 41^{11–12}, 42^{40–41}, 44^{31–33}, 46^{13–15}, 50^{12–13}, 69^{13–14}, 71¹¹, 77^{21–23}, 79²¹, 84^{13–14}, 86^{10–11}, 88², and 90^{3–4}.

mentioned in the section dedicated to the sender.¹¹⁰ Therefore, there is nothing unusual in the fact that Theotimus of Tomi did not indicate his rank within the Church in the greeting phrase. Moreover, the examples above show the fact that establishing the church rank of a hierarch based on these addressing formulas is irrelevant, at least in most cases.

The strongest argument against the existence of suffragan bishops of Tomi at that time is that no other hierarch is mentioned within the letter sent from Scythia,¹¹¹ taking into account that the emperor had particularly asked all bishops to analyse the issues raised by him within provincial synods (see above).

The disrespect of this request from the emperor by the metropolitan of Tomi might be explained by the situation of the province of the Islands. Its metropolitan, Agapitus of Rhodes, like that of Tomi, answered in his own name, mentioning also the reasons for this decision. He specified that he called the provincial synod twice, first before receiving the imperial letter and the second time after its arrival, but none of his suffragan bishops responded to the invitation. The metropolitan explained this situation by the wintertime and the long distances between the metropolitan centre and the residences of his suffragan bishops.¹¹² Agapitus mentioned that in some cases distances covered 3,000 or even 4,000 stadia (c.600–800 km).¹¹³ Moreover, he suggested that the imperial agent who brought the emperor's letter showed great hurry. Consequently, he answered in his own name, without waiting for his suffragan bishops, so as not to impede the completion of the mission entrusted to the agent.¹¹⁴

The case of the province of the Islands is not the only one of this type. A similar situation existed in the province of Pontus Polemoniacus. Two of the suffragan bishoprics [Pityus (now Pitsunda, Georgia) and Sebastopolis (ancient Dioscurias/Dioscuris, now Sukhumi/Aqwa, Abkhazia-Georgia)] of the metropolitan of Neocaesarea were situated on the Eastern coast of the Black Sea at that time, separated from the rest of the territory of the province by the Kingdom of Lazica (see Maps 6 and 7). Their names are missing from the response letter

110 ACO, II/5, pp. 67²⁻⁴, 60²⁵⁻²⁶, and 56¹².

111 See Gelzer, "Zur Zeitbestimmung," p. 342; Țsukhlev, *Istoriă*, III.e; Popescu, "Contributions à la géographie," pp. 409 and 414–415; Popescu, *Christianitas*, pp. 128 and 154; Chrysos, "Zur Entstehung," pp. 267 (n. 14) and 277–278; Nikolova, "The Church of Odessos," p. 94; Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I*, pp. 521–522, 826 (n. 5), and 827; Holubeanu, "Dependența canonică," pp. 648–649.

112 The harshness of winter is also mentioned by the hierarchs of Epirus Nova: "*et maximam propter hiemis uehementiam*" ("and mostly because of the harshness of winter") (ACO, II/5, p. 95³⁴).

113 See Schnitzler, *Im Kampfe um Chalcedon*, p. 22.

114 ACO, II/5, p. 64²⁶⁻³⁴.

of Pontus Polemoniacus' hierarchs.¹¹⁵ Those hierarchs either could not be convoked, or could not respond to the invitation because of the wintertime and/or of the great distance that separated them from the capital of the province.¹¹⁶

These explanations are also valid for the case of the ecclesiastical province of Scythia. The distance between Tomi and Chersonesus was approximately 450 km.¹¹⁷ Moreover, Scythia was the Northernmost ecclesiastical province questioned by the emperor and, as it was already shown (see above, 'Introduction'), winter was a more serious obstacle to communication between harbour cities in the region of the Black Sea than in the Aegean Sea. The words of St. John Chrysostom who, in one of his epistles, mentioned the impossibility to travel by sea to Crimea ('into the Bosphorus or into those parts') in wintertime are also suggestive.¹¹⁸ Besides, as shown below, the third suffragan episcopal see of Tomi seems to have been Bosphorus (ancient Panticapaeum, now Kerch, Crimea-Ukraine) at that time, approx. 830 km from Tomi.¹¹⁹ Therefore, it can be admitted that it was impossible for the hierarch of Tomi to call urgently his suffragan bishops from Crimea, due to the winter.

It is more difficult to understand the participation of his suffragan bishop of Odessos at the provincial synod of Moesia Secunda. Kazimierz Iłski explained it by a presumed conflict existing between the hierarchs of Tomi and Odessos at that time.¹²⁰ This explanation does not seem credible, however, as it is supported by no evidence or argument. The distance between the two cities could be taken into account in this case, as well. There was no commercial traffic by the Black Sea at that time because of the winter, and the Odessos hierarch's travelling on land (approx. 150 km) would have been long and dangerous. He could much more easily reach Marcianopolis, the distance between the two cities being only 40 km.¹²¹ A possible revolt of the troops of foederati in Scythia could be noted in support of this hypothesis.¹²²

115 See *ACO*, II/5, pp. 79²⁰–84¹¹.

116 On the situation of these two bishoprics, see below, subchapter 6.1: 'The bishoprics of Pityus and Sebastopolis.'

117 *ORBIS. The Stanford Geospatial Network Model of the Roman World*. Available at orbis.stanford.edu. Accessed 2022 May 11.

118 St. Ioannes Chrysostomus, *Epistulae IX (XIV)*, in *Lettres a Olympias*, ed. Anne-Marie Malingrey, (Sources Chrétiennes) 13 (Paris: Cerf, 1947), p. 151; John Chrysostom, *Letters to Olympias*, trans. W.R.W. Stephens, ed. D.P. Curtin (Philadelphia, PA: Dalcassian Publishing Co., 2018), p. 35.

119 *ORBIS*.

120 Iłski, "Korespondencja," p. 134.

121 *ORBIS*.

122 For the troops of foederati in Scythia and their revolt during the reign of Leo I, see Oța, "Hunii în Dobrogea," pp. 371–372.

Another possible explanation could be related to the evolution of the ecclesiastical situation in Scythia and Moesia Secunda in the second quarter of the 5th century. During the Nestorian controversy, five out of the six hierarchs of Moesia Secunda (including Metropolitan Dorotheus of Marcianopolis) are attested as sustaining Nestorius of Constantinople. At least three of them (Dorotheus, Valerian, and Eudocius) were condemned as heretics and deposed from their sees after the First Council of Ephesus (431). Another one, Marcian of Abritus, finally condemned the Nestorianism, maintaining his episcopal position also in 458, when he signed the response letter to Emperor Leo I. Moesia Secunda was not represented at the Council of Chalcedon and none of its hierarchs signed the conciliar documents at the end of the debates.¹²³ Moreover, Metropolitan Valerian of Marcianopolis died during the investigation of 457–458. His episcopal see was thus vacant at the time of the provincial synod, when the issues proposed by Emperor Leo were analyzed.¹²⁴

The situation of the see of Tomi was different during the Christological debate in those times. Timothy of Tomi, even if attested in the first part of the First Council of Ephesus as belonging to the group of pro-Nestorian bishops, eventually sided with the pro-Cyrrillian majority, signing the conciliar decrees. His follower to the episcopal see, Alexander, did not participate in the debates of Chalcedon, but signed the conciliar decrees. In these conditions, and especially under the circumstances of Metropolitan Valerian's death, Theotimus II of Tomi seems to have become the leader of the regional churches in 457–458. Therefore, it is not excluded that he may have asked his suffragan bishop of Odessos to take part in the meeting of the provincial synod at Marcianopolis in order to contribute to the writing of a theologically adequate answer. The point of view of Theotimus and that of the bishops in Moesia Secunda on the value of the dogmatical decisions of Chalcedon and other ecumenical councils are almost identical, which could be used to support this hypothesis. Their point of view, moreover, are different from those of all the other bishops in the empire, whose responses have been preserved in the textual record.¹²⁵ This

123 See Ionuț Holubeanu, "Câteva considerații privind ordinea semnăturilor episcopilor din Moesia Secunda în *Encyclia* (457/8 p.Chr.)" [Some Remarks on the Sequence of Bishops' Signatures in the Letter of Moesia Secunda in *Encyclia* (AD 457/8)], *Pontica* 50 (2017), pp. 127–135.

124 The name of Metropolitan Valerian of Marcianopolis appears on the list with the addressees of the Imperial letter included in *Encyclia*, but it does not appear in the response letter sent from Moesia Secunda—see *ACO*, II/5, pp. 24¹⁵ and 32^{1–31}. Most likely, he had died shortly before the provincial synod in Marcianopolis was held—see Zeiller, *Les origines*, pp. 165 (n. 7) and 362 (n. 1); Schwartz, "Praefatio," p. XIII; Nikolova, "The Church of Odessos," p. 94; Holubeanu, *Organizarea*, pp. 127–131.

125 See Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, p. 211.

suggests a counsel between Tomi and the suffragan bishops of Marcianopolis, in which the hierarch of Odessos could have been the connecting link.

A final observation related to *Encyclia* refers to the place of the hierarch of Tomi on the last position in the list with the addressees of the imperial letter.¹²⁶ Scholars have considered that this list may have been written directly by the imperial chancellery, reflecting the position of each letter within the original corpus.¹²⁷ Bishops were grouped according to their civil dioceses within the list,¹²⁸ except for the metropolitan of Tomi and the titular metropolitan of Bizye (Europa); both were placed at the end of the list (no. 65, and no. 64, respectively), outside the section reserved to the diocese of Thrace.¹²⁹

In the case of Tomi, certain scholars explained this exception by a presumed change of the administrative situation on the Istro-Pontic territory, as a result of repeated barbarian attacks.¹³⁰ This viewpoint has been rejected, however, by a relatively recent analysis that showed that the situation in Scythia worsened due to barbarian attacks only toward the end of Leo I's reign, namely after the end of the investigation involving *Encyclia*.¹³¹

It is possible for the names of the metropolitans of Tomi and Bizye to have been registered within the section reserved for the diocese of Thrace in the original form of the list with the addressees. Their presence in the final part of *Encyclia* may have resulted from a copyist's mistake. More precisely, they may have been omitted by error during the process of copying the list and added subsequently at its end, when the mistake was noticed. In this case, the position of their names outside the section reserved for the diocese of Thrace has no particular meaning. An argument in favour of this explanation is the absence of two other addressees' names (Euippus of Neocaesarea in Pontus Polemoniacus and Sebastian of Beroe in Thrace) from the content of the list preserved, whose response letters were found in *Encyclia*.¹³² Scholars have explained their omission also relative to a copyist's error.¹³³ The difference between these two cases would be the fact that the omission of metropolitans of Tomi and Bizye's names was noticed and corrected, whereas that of the

126 ACO, II/5, p. 24²⁷.

127 Schwartz, "Praefatio," p. xv; Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I*, pp. 826–829.

128 See Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I*, pp. 827–828.

129 ACO, II/5, p. 24^{26–27}.

130 See Maenchen-Helfen, *The World of the Huns*, p. 159, n. 792; Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I*, pp. 358–359 (n. 324), 627–629, and 827. In the opinion of Eduard Schwartz ("Praefatio," p. XIII), the hierarch of Tomi was placed at the end of the list because his province belonged to the Goths.

131 Oța, "Hunii în Dobrogea," pp. 366–373.

132 See ACO, II/5, pp. 30–31 and 79–84.

133 Schwartz, "Praefatio," p. XIII; Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I*, p. 826, n. 2.

other two hierarchs' names was unnoticed. Therefore, the position of the hierarch of Tomi' name in the final part of the list with the addressees in *Encyclia* is most probably unrelated to his rank.

2.2.3 *The 6th Century*

The status of metropolis of the see of Tomi is confirmed in the 6th century by the information about two local hierarchs: Paternus (498–c.520) and Valentinian (c.550). Scholarship has already treated thoroughly the case of the first hierarch.¹³⁴ The most important information on his metropolitan rank can be found in a letter of the papal legates in Constantinople, sent on 5 July 519. In this document, the senders inform Pope Hormisdas (514–523) about the conflicts between the bishops and the monks in Scythia: “*isti [monachi de Scythia] de sua prouincia episcopos accusant, inter quos est Paternus Tomitanae ciuitatis antistes*” (“these [i.e., monks in Scythia] accuse the bishops in their province, among whom is Paternus, the bishop of the city of Tomi”).¹³⁵

The value of this information resides in the fact that it certifies the existence of more bishops in the ecclesiastical province of Scythia. Therefore, we can conclude that Tomi had the rank of great metropolis and not that of an autocephalous archbishopric (a metropolis without suffragan bishoprics). The suffragan bishoprics of Tomi must have been situated outside the territory of the Roman province at that time. *Codex of Justinian*, attesting that the special church organization in the Roman Scythia (only one bishop, that of Tomi, for

134 See above, ‘Introduction,’ n. 33.

135 *Epistulae imperatorum pontificum aliorum inde ab a. CCCLXVII usque ad a. DLIII datae Avellana quae dicitur Collectio* (hereafter cited as *Avell.Coll.*), ed. Otto Günther, (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*) 35/2 (Prague/Vienna: F. Tempsky; Leipzig: G. Freytag, 1898), p. 678⁴⁻⁵. On account of the fact that historical sources attest the existence only of the bishop of Tomi in Scythia, Jacques Zeiller (*Les origines*, pp. 383–384, n. 9) suggested that the Scythian monks accused also the bishops in Moesia Secunda and even that of the Catholic Goths in Cimmerian Bosphorus, together with Paternus. He explained the wording (‘*de sua prouincia*’/‘in their province’) of the papal legates by the fact that they did not know the borders of the ecclesiastical provinces in the region and, for these reasons, they associated two or even three of these; similarly, Moreau, “To Baptise,” p. 102. Louis Duchesne [*L’Église au VI^e siècle* (Paris: De Bocard, 1925), p. 57, n. 1] also considered the wording of the papal legates as wrong; similarly, Viktor Schurr, *Die Trinitätslehre des Boethius im Lichte der “skytischen Kontroversen,”* (Forschungen zur christlichen Literatur und Dogmengeschichte) 18/1 (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1935), p. 178. On this issue, see also below, subchapter 12.3.1: ‘The involvement of the Scythian monks in the theological debates of the 5th–6th centuries.’

the whole province) had not been changed at least until 534, is relevant for this consideration.¹³⁶

Paternus is attested as a metropolitan also in documents of the Home Synod of 520. He used the title of *'episcopus metropolitanus'* ('metropolitan bishop') in his signature at the end of the letter addressed by the Synod members to Pope Hormisdas: "*Paternus misericordia dei episcopus prouinciae Scythiae metropolitanus*" ("Paternus by the mercy of God metropolitan bishop of the province of Scythia").¹³⁷ Moreover, in the same document, both in the greeting phrase and in the signatures, he is mentioned and signed, respectively, in line with the metropolitans, not with the suffragan bishops.¹³⁸ This information would also go with a titular metropolitan (autocephalous archbishop), but, correlated with the details in the papal legates' letter on 5 July 519, they confirm the rank of great metropolis of the see of Tomi.

The inscription on a silver liturgical plate that belonged to the Church of Tomi, dated to 498, mentions Paternus as a *'reuerentissimus episcopus'* ('most devout bishop'): "*Ex antiquis renovatum est per Paternum reuerentiss(imum) episc(opum) nostrum. Amen*" ("[This plate] was renovated from old [i.e., 'out of old objects,' or 'from old materials'] by Paternus, our most devout bishop. Amen").¹³⁹ Nevertheless, this inscription does not help establish Paternus' rank

136 See above, subchapter 2.1: 'Tomi as the only see of Scythia as attested in documents,' and also below, subchapter 3.1: 'Justinian I's code and Zeno's law.'

137 *Avell. Coll.*, p. 714³⁻⁴.

138 *Avell. Coll.*, pp. 710²⁸ and 714³⁻⁴; see also Holubeanu, *Organizarea*, pp. 360–362, annex 10. There is a hierarchical list of signatures in this case, as well. The only exception is John of Claudiopolis in Isauria, who, being an ordinary bishop, signed in line with the metropolitans. This fact could be explained by the situation of the Church in Isauria. At that date (518), Bishop John was in direct conflict both with the metropolitan of Seleucia and with all the other hierarchs of his province, for dogmatic reasons. John was the only pro-Chalcedonian hierarch in Isauria, all the others being non-Chalcedonian. Moreover, becoming unwanted in his province, the Bishop John took refuge in Constantinople—see Ernst Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés monophysites d'Asie antérieure au VI^e siècle*, (*Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*) 127 (Subsidia) 2 (Leuven: Durbecq, 1951), pp. 89–90. In these conditions, pro-Chalcedonian bishops in the Capital may have admitted John's right to represent his province, instead of his metropolitan, considered a heretic. Such situations had been previously registered at the First Council of Ephesus, where certain suffragan bishops represented their province in line with the metropolitans, because the primates of their provinces were considered heretics—see Gerland and Laurent, *Corpus notitiarum*, p. 28; Crabbe, "The Invitation List," pp. 385–388.

139 Jack L. Schrader, "Plate of Paternus," in *Age of Spirituality: Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century: Catalogue of the Exhibition at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, November 19, 1977, through February 12, 1978*, ed. Kurt Weitzmann (New York, N.Y.: Metropolitan Museum of Art/Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 610–611, no. 546; Alexandru Madgearu, "The Plate of Paternus from the Malaja Perešćepina Treasure:

at that time, as the phrase *'reuerentissimus episcopus'* had been used for all hierarchs (irrespective of their rank within the Church) before the Second Council of Constantinople (553). Thus, Pope Leo I (440–461) is mentioned in the correspondence between Galla Placidia and Emperor Theodosius II as *'reuerentissimus Leo episcopus'* ('Leo the most devout bishop').¹⁴⁰ In the list with the addressees in *Encyclia*, written by the imperial chancellery in Constantinople, the names of all hierarchs, irrespective of their church rank (pope, archbishops of Constantinople, Antioch, and Jerusalem, metropolitans, and ordinary bishops) are accompanied by the same phrase (*'reuerentissimus episcopus'*).¹⁴¹ Its Greek version (ἑὐλαβέστατος ἐπίσκοπος) appears in the attendance list of the hearing of 449, and used for all the hierarchs mentioned there (the archbishop of Constantinople, metropolitans, and ordinary bishops).¹⁴² Therefore, the rank of Paternus cannot be established on the basis of the inscription of 498.¹⁴³

In what concerns the rank of Valentinian of Tomi, a mention at the end of the epistle addressed to him by Pope Vigilius (537–555) is considered a possible proof that he had certain suffragan bishops.¹⁴⁴ Those under Valentinian's authority are mentioned at the end of the letter: "*sed et uniuersos ad tuam pertinentes ordinationem commoneas*" ("but that you should admonish all who are subject to your authority").¹⁴⁵

However, all the documents that mention him indicate his role as bishop (*'episcopus'*), and not as metropolitan bishop (*'episcopus metropolitanus'*),

Booty or Gift?" in *Études byzantines et post-byzantines*, 6, eds. Emilian Popescu and Tudor Teoteoi (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2011), pp. 65–71.

140 *ACO*, II/3.1, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1935), p. 14²⁴. Similarly, *ACO*, II/3.1, pp. 14³⁵ and 16¹⁸.

141 *ACO*, II/5, pp. 22³²–24²⁷; see also Holubeanu, *Organizarea*, pp. 343–348, annex 7.

142 *ACO*, II/1.1, 148⁴–149¹⁸; see also Holubeanu, *Organizarea*, pp. 333–336, annex 5. For the equivalence of the phrases ἑὐλαβέστατος ἐπίσκοπος and *'reuerentissimus episcopus'*, see Ernst Jerg, *Vir venerabilis. Untersuchungen zur Titulatur der Bischöfe in den ausserkirchlichen Texten der Spätantike als Beitrag zur Deutung ihrer öffentlichen Stellung* (Vienna: Herder, 1970), pp. 99, 101, and 165; Price and Gaddis, *The Acts*, I, p. 123, n. 36.

143 Alexandru Suceveanu [*Histria. Les résultats des fouilles. XIII. La basilique épiscopale*] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2007), p. 141] tended to believe that Paternus did not have the rank of metropolitan at that time.

144 See Popescu, *Christianitas Daco-Romana*, p. 132, n. 51; Virgil Lungu, "The Christian Scythia," in Zahariade, *Scythia Minor*, p. 206; Nelu Zugravu, "Itineraria ecclesiastica nella Scythia Minor," *Classica et Christiana* 5 (2010), no. 1, p. 240.

145 *ACO*, IV/1, ed. Johannes Straub (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1971), p. 196^{30–31}; Richard Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553 with Related Texts on the Three Chapters Controversy*, 2, (Translated Texts for Historians) 51 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), p. 93.

which was invoked against Valentinian's metropolitan rank.¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, a proof is certain in favour of Valentinian's metropolitan rank. At the Second Council of Constantinople (553), the epithets in the addressing formulas were used following precise rules, depending on the rank of each hierarch. The one used for metropolitans (including titular metropolitans) was *'religiosissimus/θεοσεβέστατος'* ('most religious').¹⁴⁷ Within the seventh meeting of the council, one of the Imperial court officials used exactly this term when he referred to Valentinian's name: "*ad Valentinianum religiosissimum episcopum Scythiae*" ("to the most religious Bishop Valentinian of Scythia").¹⁴⁸ This indicates that the hierarch of Tomi had at least the rank of titular metropolitan at that time, and not that of an ordinary bishop. On the other hand, given the fact that Paternus had been previously attested with suffragan bishops, it is fully justified to consider that the situation was the same in Valentinian's time. Otherwise, it would mean admitting that Tomi was downgraded from the rank of great metropolis to that of a titular metropolitan see during the reign of Justinian I. This, however, is improbable, given the relatively stable situation in the Istro-Pontic region at the time of this emperor's rule.¹⁴⁹ Besides, as will be shown below, archaeological discoveries prove that the episcopal network was extended in Scythia during the reign of Justinian I.¹⁵⁰

Finally, *Notitia episcopatum* 3 attests to the existence of an ecclesiastical province of Scythia, but with a different structure than the one presented until now. Tomi is registered as a great metropolis and its 14 suffragan bishoprics are situated in cities from the Roman province of Scythia.¹⁵¹ This shows that, at a certain moment, ecclesiastical Scythia was reorganized.

2.3 The Main Historical Stages of the See of Tomi

As have been seen, the sources attesting the existence of only one ecclesiastical see in Scythia are dated: in 304 (during the time of Evangelicus of Tomi), in 369 (at the time of Vetriciano of Tomi), on 30 July 381 (the law of

146 See Noël Duval, "L'archéologie chrétienne en Roumanie à propos de deux livres récents de I. Barnea," *Revue archéologique* [N.S.] 2 (1980), p. 314; Atanasov, *Khristiānskiāt Durostorum*, p. 91, n. 9; Atanassov, "Christianity," pp. 360 and 363.

147 See Chrysos, *Die Bischofslisten*, pp. 51–52 ff.

148 *ACO*, IV/1, p. 186^{7–8}; Price, *The Acts*, 2, p. 77.

149 For the metropolitan rank of Valentinian of Tomi, see also below, chapter 4: '*Valentinianus episcopus Scythiae*.'

150 See chapter 3: 'The ordinary bishoprics on the territory of the Roman province of Scythia.'

151 Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum* 3.40.642–656, p. 242.

Emperor Theodosius I), at the end of the 4th century—the beginning of the 5th century (during the time of Theotimus I of Tomi), between the years 439 and 450 (a period when Sozomen wrote his *Church History*), in 457–458 (*Encyclia*), between 474 and 484 (Emperor Zeno's law) and on 16 November 534 (republishing of Zeno's law in the *Codex of Justinian*). The metropolitan rank of the hierarchs of Tomi was attested: in July 381 (the signature list of the First Council of Constantinople), in 400 (at the time of Theotimus I), in 430–431 (before and at the First Council of Ephesus), on 13 April 449 (during the time of Alexander of Tomi), in 457–458 (*Encyclia*), in 519–520 (at the time of Paternus of Tomi) and in 553 (during the time of Valentinian of Tomi).¹⁵²

Of utmost importance for the present analysis is the fact that the hierarchs of Tomi are identified three times with suffragan bishops (381, 457–458, and 519). The first case (381) is the bishop of Chersonesus, the second one (457–458) is the bishop of Odessos, and the third one (5 July 519) is the case of certain bishops whose sees are not specified. This means that the see of Tomi had the rank of great metropolis at that time, and not that of an autocephalous metropolis (titular metropolitan see, autocephalous archbishopric). It must be mentioned that in two cases (in July 381 and during the reign of Theotimus I) the two types of information (only one bishop in Scythia and Tomi as a metropolitan see) are contemporary. The situation in 381 is more important as the Tomitan hierarch is attested with a suffragan bishop, as well (that of Chersonesus).

These sources suggest that the two types of information do not reflect situations that succeeded each other or alternated over time, but were contemporary and, therefore, complementary. This situation can be explained by the fact that the first type of information (the existence of only one bishop in Scythia) refers strictly to the territory of the Roman province of Scythia, whereas the second type of information (the attestation of Tomi as a metropolis with suffragan bishoprics) refers to an ecclesiastical province with a greater geographical extent as compared to the civil one. Furthermore, both Sozomen and Zeno's law of 474–484 mention the existence of only one bishop on the territory of the Roman Scythia, without excluding the possibility for the hierarchs of Tomi to have had suffragan bishops outside this area.¹⁵³

152 Of the hierarchs of Tomi that are known at present from the period 381—the middle of the 6th century, only two are not attested with the metropolitan rank: Peter (c.480–498) and John (c.530–c.550). This situation results from the lack of detailed historical information about them. On Peter, see below, subchapter 12.2.2: 'The Preface to the Latin translation of the Synodal Letter (no. 17) to Nestorius.' On John, see below, subchapter 12.3.2: 'Textual sources about the Scythian monks.'

153 See above, subchapter 2.1: 'Tomi as the only see of Scythia as attested in documents.'

Based on this analysis, we can conclude that the see of Tomi permanently had the rank of great metropolis, at least between the years 381 and 553.

There are several other aspects that require clarification: 1. When was the first ecclesiastical province of Scythia created, and which was its initial jurisdiction; 2. When were the suffragan bishoprics on the territory of Roman Scythia founded, and how many were there; 3. When was the see of Tomi an autocephalous archbishopric (autocephalous metropolis), the rank with which it is attested in *Notitiae episcopatum* 1–2 and 4–5.

2.3.1 *The Incipient Structure of the Ecclesiastical Province of Scythia*

The provisions of canon 4 of the First Council of Nicaea (325) impose the election of a bishop by at least three of the hierarchs of each ecclesiastical province.¹⁵⁴ The observance of this provision implies the existence of at least four episcopal sees within each province. It can be assumed, in this case, that there was at least one more see in ecclesiastical Scythia alongside the metropolis of Tomi and the bishoprics of Chersonesus and Odessos.

This fourth bishopric of Scythia is not mentioned in any of the documents known to date. A possible clue for its location could be the surname of the province of Scythia in *Notitia episcopatum* 3: “ἐπαρχία Σκυθίας παραθαλασσία τοῦ Πόντου” (“The province of Scythia, lying on the [Black] Sea coast”).¹⁵⁵ This short geographical description of Scythia indicates that at a certain time all the episcopal sees on its territory were situated on the Black Sea coast. As the cities of Tomi, Odessos, and Chersonesus are in such a position, the fourth episcopal centre is expected to have been situated also in a city by the sea.

Another condition that this third episcopal centre must have fulfilled is the geographical proximity southward as Odessos, and northward, as Chersonesus, the episcopal centres closest to Tomi. This aspect leads to the assumption that the third suffragan bishopric of ecclesiastical Scythia was situated either toward the south, in Moesia Secunda or Haemimontus, or toward the north, in Crimea, or even toward the east, in Taman Peninsula (see Map 6). In the south, the closest bishoprics were Durostorum (now Silistra, Bulgaria) in Moesia Secunda and Mesembria (now Nesebar, Bulgaria) in Haemimontus. The bishopric of Bosphorus and that of the Goths are known in Crimea, whereas in the Taman Peninsula, that of Phanagoria (now Sennoy, Krasnodar Krai, Russia).

The extant documentary evidence invalidates the assertion that the bishopric of Durostorum was part of the ecclesiastical province of Scythia. At the First Council of Ephesus (431), Bishop Jacob indicated ‘*Mysia*’ (i.e., Moesia Secunda)

¹⁵⁴ Tanner, *Decrees*, p. 7.

¹⁵⁵ Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum* 3.40.642, p. 242.

as his province, without any reference to Scythia: “*Iacobus episcopus Dorostoli Mysiae subscripsi*” (“Jacob bishop of Durostorum in Moesia [Secunda], I have signed”).¹⁵⁶ In 457–458, in the response letter addressed to Emperor Leo I, Bishop Minofilus of Durostorum made no reference to Scythia in his signature: “*Minofilos episcopus ciuitatis Durostori similiter*” (“Minofilus bishop of the city of Durostorum, similarly”).¹⁵⁷ If his see had been part of Scythia, he would have most probably indicated this fact, as did Dizas of Odessos. Besides, except for the last-mentioned case, in the letter of 457–458 no other bishop of Moesia Secunda wrote in his signature the name of Scythia. Furthermore, the city of Durostorum was situated on the Danube shore, and not on the Black Sea coast. Consequently, it did not meet the condition of being a harbour city of the Black Sea.

Mesembria is the first episcopal centre on the Black Sea coast situated south of Odessos. The city was part of the Pontic community for a while (2nd century). That Greek political alliance had the headquarters at Tomi (see above). This aspect could be considered as a possible indication of the passing of its see under the jurisdiction of Tomi, at least for some time. It is impossible to confirm this hypothesis, however, as no documentary information was preserved about the bishops of Mesembria in the 4th–6th centuries.¹⁵⁸ Nevertheless, despite the historical relations between Tomi and Mesembria, the extension of the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical Scythia south of the Balkan Mountains (*Haemus Mons*) seems unrealistic. In the 4th century, Scythia was more connected to Crimea than to the territories south of the Balkans, at least from a military perspective.

To the north, in Crimea, past Chersonesus, the next episcopal see was that of the Bosphorus, first attested in documents at the First Council of Nicaea (325). In the preserved variants of the signature list, that of Cadmus of Bosphorus appears in the rubric ‘*Βοσπόρου*’-Bosphori/Bosfori/Bospori.¹⁵⁹ This shows that the see was not part of any ecclesiastical provinces on the territory of the Roman Empire at that time.¹⁶⁰ On the other hand, the quite active participation of the hierarchs of Bosphorus in the church life of the Eastern Roman Empire over the 5th and 6th centuries is to be noted. They are attested at four Home Synods (448, 458/459, 518, and 536), at the hearing held in Constantinople

156 ACO, I.4, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1922–1923), p. 28³⁵ (no. XXIII).

157 ACO, II/5, p. 32²⁸.

158 See Le Quien, *Oriens christianus*, col. 1179–1182; Fedalto, *Hierarchia*, I, pp. 320–321.

159 Heinrich Gelzer, Heinrich Hilgenfeld, and Otto Cuntz, *Patrum nicaenorum nomina Latinae, Graecae, Coptice Syriace, Arabice, Armeniace* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1898), pp. LXIV, 56–57, 70, 117, 141 (as *Marcus Bospori*), and 215.

160 Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur*, pp. 175–176.

(8 and 13 April 449) and at the Second Council of Ephesus (449). This suggests the integration at a certain moment of this see into one of the Roman ecclesiastical provinces. In favour of its passing under the jurisdiction of Tomi, pleads the common participation of the hierarchs of Chersonesus and Bosphorus in the Home Synod of 448 (22 November), in the hearing of 449 (13 April) and in the Second Council of Ephesus 449 (8 August). The last-mentioned participation is the most important one for the present investigation, as in the attendance list of the Council of 449 one can observe the grouping of the suffragan bishops according to the provinces they represented (with certain exceptions).¹⁶¹ The names of the bishops of Chersonesus and Bosphorus are consecutively registered in the list (positions 105 and 106, respectively). This evidence could indicate that the two sees were part of the same ecclesiastical province (Scythia) at that time.¹⁶² Moreover, Bosphorus was a city situated on the Black Sea coast.

Another maritime city was Phanagoria, but it was most probably not an episcopal centre before the first half of the 5th century.¹⁶³ Therefore, Phanagoria cannot be taken into account in establishing the initial structure of the ecclesiastical province of Scythia.

The bishopric of the Goths in Crimea could not be a suffragan of Tomi, either. As shown in one of the subchapters to come, it was under the direct jurisdiction of the see of Constantinople.¹⁶⁴

The analysis up to this point leads to the conclusion that ecclesiastical Scythia most probably had the following structure in its incipient form: Tomi (great metropolis), Chersonesus, Bosphorus, and Odessos (suffragan bishoprics). Those who founded it, looking for bishoprics to pass under the jurisdiction of Tomi, may have taken into account first of all the episcopal sees in Crimea, which were not integrated into the metropolitan type of organization system.¹⁶⁵ As they were not sufficient to meet the canonical functioning conditions of an ecclesiastical province, the see of Odessos was included in the structure of Scythia. This decision was probably based on the historical relations between Tomi and Odessos.

161 ACO, II/1.1, pp. 77^{17–19}, 24–26 and 78^{15–826}; see also Holubeanu, *Organizarea*, pp. 336–343, annex 6.

162 On the history of the see of Bosphorus, see also below, subchapter 6.5: 'The see of Bosphorus.'

163 On the bishopric of Phanagoria, see below, subchapter 6.6: 'The see of Phanagoria.'

164 See below, subchapter 6.7: 'The bishopric of the Goths.'

165 See Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur*, pp. 175–176.

2.3.2 *Dating the Foundation of Ecclesiastical Scythia*

A certain *terminus ante quem* of the foundation of the ecclesiastical province of Scythia could be considered 9 July 381. This date marked the end of the First Council of Constantinople, in whose signature list Chersonesus is attested as a suffragan of Tomi.¹⁶⁶ First Council of Nicaea could be considered as the *terminus post quem*. As already shown, in the signature list of this council, that of Bishop Cadmus appears in the rubric of Bosphorus. This indicates that the see of Bosphorus was not part of ecclesiastical Scythia at that time and, implicitly, that the last-mentioned one had not been organized. On the other hand, the fact that certain suffragan bishoprics situated outside Roman Scythia passed under the jurisdiction of the metropolis of Tomi indicates the organization of the homonymous ecclesiastical province under the patronage of one of the emperors of Constantinople. Its foundation during the reign of Constantius II (337–361), Julian (361–363), or Valens (364–378), is unlikely. Julian renounced his Christian faith and was even a persecutor of Christians. It was during his reign that the four martyrs whose relics were discovered at Niculițel were condemned to death.¹⁶⁷ The other two emperors (Constantius II and Valens) were Semi-Arians, opposing the hierarchs of Tomi, who stood out as firm defenders of the Nicene doctrine. Valens is known to have come into conflict with Vetranio of Tomi, whom he also exiled for a while.¹⁶⁸ In this case, the foundation of ecclesiastical Scythia must have taken place during the reign of Theodosius I, probably between 24 November 380, when the emperor entered Constantinople, and 9 July 381, when the works of the First Council of Constantinople were completed. The foundation took place most probably during the First Council of Constantinople (May–July 381). The mention of Terentius of Tomi among the hierarchs considered as landmarks for the Catholic faith (see above) proves the fact that he stood out at the council as a good theologian and a firm defender of Neo-Nicene theology. Sozomen specifies, on the other hand, that Emperor Theodosius I showed great interest in the situation of the hierarchs considered landmarks for the Catholic faith and of their churches: “The emperor was personally acquainted with all these bishops, and had ascertained that they governed their respective churches wisely and piously.”¹⁶⁹ During the discussion he had with Terentius, the emperor could have found out about the atypical church organization in Scythia and that Tomi did not have suffragan bishoprics. He may have decided to organize

166 On the end of the First Council of Constantinople, see Tanner, *Decrees*, p. 23.

167 See above, ‘Introduction.’

168 Sozomenos, *Historia ecclesiastica* VI.21.5, pp. 263²⁹–264¹; trans., p. 799.

169 Sozomenos, *Historia ecclesiastica* VII.9.7, pp. 312²³–313¹; trans., pp. 853–854.

the ecclesiastical province of Scythia in order to reward the Tomitan hierarchs' fidelity to the Nicene doctrine. In order to respect the specific aspect of church organization in Roman Scythia, Theodosius and his counsellors decided to pass the two bishoprics in Crimea and the one at Odessos under the jurisdiction of Tomi.

The foundation of ecclesiastical Scythia during the reign of Emperor Theodosius I is also in agreement with the information presented in a hagiographic document about the first bishops of Chersonesus (*Lives of the Bishops of Chersonesus*). The preserved versions of this document also mention Aetherius of Chersonesus, identified with the homonymous bishop participant in the First Council of Constantinople. In the hagiographic text, he is said to have been the first hierarch of Chersonesus who asked the emperor of Constantinople for help in order to protect the Christians in his city. One of the consequences of his initiative was the passing of the Church in Chersonesus under the jurisdiction of the one in Constantinople. Considering also Aetherius' name in the rubric of the Scythia province at the council of 381, the information exposed in the hagiographic text shows the fact that he was the first hierarch of Chersonesus suffragan of the metropolitan of Tomi.¹⁷⁰

Finally, the political and military context of that time is also favourable for this dating. Theodosius I continued the military policy of Valens toward Chersonesus, consolidating the Roman military presence in that area. Important for the present analysis is also the fact that the Roman troops deployed to Chersonesus were transferred from the diocese of Thrace, and not from that of Oriens. This indicates that the Crimea Peninsula continued to be associated with the territories of the north and east parts of the Balkans, within the plan of the Roman military organization.¹⁷¹ The structure of the ecclesiastical province of Scythia might have been inspired also by the regional military organization.

In conclusion, ecclesiastical Scythia, having the see of Tomi as a metropolis and those of Chersonesus, Bosporus, and Odessos as suffragan bishoprics, was most probably organized during the First Council of Constantinople (May–July 381).

170 See below, subchapter 6.4: 'The see of Chersonesus.'

171 Zuckerman, "The Early Byzantine Strongholds," pp. 550–552; Constantine Zuckerman, "Episkopy i garnizon Khersona v IV veke" [Bishops and Garrison of Chersonesus in the 4th Century], *Materialy po archeologii, istorii i ètnografii Tavrii* 4 (1995), p. 558.

2.3.3 *The Evolution of the Ecclesiastical Province of Scythia after 381*

Despite the insufficient and sometimes unclear historical information preserved, the evolution of the ecclesiastical province of Scythia can be identified on its account. The documentary evidence for certain suffragan bishoprics on the territory of Roman Scythia, on the one hand, and of the see of Tomi as autocephalous archbishopric, on the other hand, indicates that ecclesiastical Scythia was reorganized at least on two occasions. The dating of these events is attempted in the pages that follow.

Indications for the dating of the first reorganization can be obtained by analyzing the evolution of the suffragan sees of Tomi (Chesonesus, Bosphorus, and Odessos). In the case of Bosphorus, Eudoxius is attested as suffragan bishop at the Home Synod of 448 (22 November), at the hearing of 449 (8 and 13 April), at the Second Council of Ephesus (8 August 449), and at the Home Synod of 458/459.¹⁷² In October 457, the hierarch of Bosphorus does not appear on the list in *Encyclia* with the addressees of Emperor Leo I, meaning that he did not have the rank of metropolitan at that time, but that of suffragan bishop. In the 6th century, John of Bosphorus appears also as suffragan bishop at the Home Synod of 518 (16–20 July) and at the first session of the one in 536 (2 May).¹⁷³ On the other hand, he is mentioned with the rank of metropolitan at the second session of the Home Synod of 536 (6 May).¹⁷⁴ He appears with the same rank at the three following meetings of the Synod (10 and 21 May, and 4 June).¹⁷⁵

172 22 November 448: a hierarchical list of signatures (*ACO*, II/1.1, p. 146^{19–20}; Holubeanu, *Organizarea*, pp. 325–330, annex 3). Presbyter Basiliscus signed, in line with the suffragan bishops, in the name of Bishop Eudoxius. 8 April 449: a hierarchical list of attendance (*ACO*, II/1.1, p. 150²⁷; Holubeanu, *Organizarea*, pp. 330–332, annex 4). 13 April 449: a hierarchical list of attendance (*ACO*, II/1.1, p. 148³¹; Holubeanu, *Organizarea*, pp. 333–336, annex 5). 8 August 449: a hierarchical list of attendance, but with many exceptions (*ACO*, II/1.1, p. 81⁸; Holubeanu, *Organizarea*, pp. 336–343, annex 6). For the place of Bishop Eudoxius in the list of attendance on 8 August 449 and his rank within the Church, see also Honigmann, “The Original Lists” (see above, n. 22), pp. 36 (no. 108) and 40–41. The Home Synod of 458/459: a hierarchical list of signatures [Eduard Schwartz, *Publizistische sammlungen zum acacianischen schisma* (Munich: Beck, 1934), p. 176, n. 1, no. 39; Holubeanu, *Organizarea*, pp. 348–355, annex 8].

173 16–20 July 518: a hierarchical list of signatures, written on 20 July 518 (*ACO*, III, p. 65²¹; Holubeanu, *Organizarea*, pp. 355–359, annex 9). 2 May 536: a hierarchical list of attendance (*ACO*, III, p. 126²⁶; Holubeanu, *Organizarea*, pp. 362–367, annex 11): “Ἰωάννου Βοσπόρου” (‘John of Bosphorus’).

174 A hierarchical list of attendance (*ACO*, III, p. 155³; Holubeanu, *Organizarea*, pp. 367–372, annex 12): “Ἰωάννου τῆς μητροπόλεως Βοσπόρου” (‘John of the metropolis of Bosphorus’).

175 10 May: a hierarchical list of attendance (*ACO*, III, p. 162²⁷; Holubeanu, *Organizarea*, pp. 372–378, annex 13): “Ἰωάννου τῆς μητροπόλεως Βοσπόρου” (‘John of the metropolis of Bosphorus’). 21 May: a hierarchical list of attendance (*ACO*, III, p. 171¹; Holubeanu, *Organizarea*, pp. 378–383, annex 14): “Ἰωάννου τῆς μητροπόλεως Βοσπόρου” (‘John of the

This shows that the see of Bosphorus was raised to the rank of metropolis between 2 and 6 May 536. Synodal documents of 536 do not say what type of metropolis became Bosphorus at that time (great or autocephalous metropolis). As shown below, the analysis of all the documentary information available suggests the rank of an autocephalous metropolis.¹⁷⁶ The fact that Bosphorus bishopric was raised to the rank of metropolis proves that the ecclesiastical province of Scythia was undergoing a process of reorganization in May 536. It is to be noted that the reorganization of civil and military structures in the region, through the creation of *quaestura exercitus Iustiniani*, took place also in May 536.¹⁷⁷

In the case of the episcopal see of Chersonesus, there is not enough information to establish the rank of Bishop Asclepiades, mentioned in a law issued by Emperors Honorius (384–423) and Theodosius II on 24 September 419.¹⁷⁸ However, Longinus of Chersonesus is attested as ordinary bishop at the Home Synod of 448 (22 November), at the hearing of 449 (13 April), and at the Second Council of Ephesus (8 August 449).¹⁷⁹ In 457–458, the hierarch of Chersonesus does not appear on the list with the addressees of Emperor Leo I in *Encyclia*, which indicates that he did not have the rank of metropolitan, but that of a suffragan bishop at that time. The rank of Bishop Stephen (c.553) cannot be

metropolis of Bosphorus”). Also, a hierarchical list of signatures, in which John of Bosphorus appears within the group of metropolitans (ACO, III, p. 183³⁵; Holubeanu, *Organizarea*, pp. 383–392, annex 15): “Ἰωάννης ἐλέει θεοῦ ἐπίσκοπος Βοσπόρου ὀρίσας ὑπεσημηνάμην” (“John by the mercy of God bishop of Bosphorus, I have so decreed and signed”). June 4: a hierarchical list of attendance (ACO, III, p. 27³²; Holubeanu, *Organizarea*, pp. 392–397, annex 16): “Ἰωάννου τῆς μητροπόλεως Βοσπόρου” (“John of the metropolis of Bosphorus”). Also, a hierarchical list of signatures, in which John is mentioned within the group of metropolitans (ACO, III, p. 115¹⁴; Holubeanu, *Organizarea*, pp. 397–408, annex 17): “Ἰωάννης ἐλέει θεοῦ ἐπίσκοπος Βοσπόρου ὀρίσας ὑπεσημηνάμην” (“John by the mercy of God bishop of Bosphorus, I have so decreed and signed”). It is to be noticed that John, even if he had the rank of metropolitan, did not mention his metropolitan title in the signatures, probably out of humility.

176 On the history of the bishopric of Bosphorus in the 4th–6th centuries, see below, subchapter 6.5: ‘The see of Bosphorus.’

177 On *quaestura exercitus Iustiniani*, see above, ‘Introduction.’

178 *Codex Theodosianus* VIII.40.24, p. 507^{2–3}; trans., p. [258].

179 22 November 448: a hierarchical list of signatures (ACO, II/1.1, p. 146¹; Holubeanu, *Organizarea*, pp. 325–330, annex 3). 13 April 449: a hierarchical list of attendance (ACO, II/1.1, p. 148¹⁹; Holubeanu, *Organizarea*, pp. 333–336, annex 5). 8 August 449: a hierarchical list of attendance, but with many exceptions (ACO, II/1.1, p. 81⁷; Holubeanu, *Organizarea*, pp. 336–343, annex 6). On the attendance and signature lists preserved from the Second Council of Ephesus, see Honigmann, “The Original Lists,” pp. 28–41. On the position of Bishop Longinus of Chersonesus in the attendance list on 8 August 449 and his rank within the Church, see Honigmann, “The Original Lists,” pp. 36 (no. 107) and 40–41.

established in the middle of the 6th century, as he did not participate in the Second Council of Constantinople (553), but only signed the Council decrees when its sessions concluded.¹⁸⁰ Other bishops of Chersonesus of the 6th century are not known.¹⁸¹

As we can observe, the data regarding the bishops of Chersonesus do not permit the identification of their see rank evolution after the first half of the 5th century. Nevertheless, the registration of Chersonesus as autocephalous archbishopric in the old *Notitiae episcopatum* proves the fact that it was raised to this rank after 457–458. On the other hand, as Chersonesus always appears first as compared to Bosphorus within the Constantinopolitan church hierarchy, its elevation to the rank of an autocephalous archbishopric must have preceded, or at least must have been contemporary with, the raising of Bosphorus to the same rank.¹⁸² The situation of the cities of Chersonesus and Bosphorus during the reign of Justinian I indicates the simultaneous raising of the two bishoprics to the rank of autocephalous archbishoprics (in May 536).¹⁸³

In what concerns the episcopal see of Odessos, Bishop Dizas is attested in 457–458 as suffragan bishop of the metropolitan of Tomi.¹⁸⁴ John of Odessos signed as a suffragan bishop the documents at the Home Synod of 518, without mentioning his ecclesiastical province.¹⁸⁵ On the other hand, Martin of Odessos, mentioned in *Novella* 65 (1 April 538), had the rank of metropolitan of Moesia Secunda. The same document shows that he had held this position for some time.¹⁸⁶ Subsequently, in *Novella* 120 (9 May 544), the see of Odessos seems to take precedence over that of Tomi.¹⁸⁷ This proves that after reaching the rank of great metropolis of Moesia Secunda, Odessos also inherited the place of the see of Marcianopolis within the Constantinopolitan church hierarchy.¹⁸⁸ Therefore, the see of Odessos was removed from the jurisdiction of Tomi between 518 and 538 and raised to the rank of great metropolis of

180 *ACO*, IV/1, p. 231⁷. See also Price, *The Acts*, 2, p. 138, n. 107.

181 On the history of the bishopric of Chersonesus in the 4th–6th centuries, see below, subchapter 6.4: ‘The see of Chersonesus.’

182 Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum* 1.62–63, p. 206; 2.66–67, p. 218; 3.82–83, p. 232; 4.63–64, p. 250; 5.67–68, p. 266.

183 See below, subchapter 6.4: ‘The see of Chersonesus.’

184 See above, subchapter 2.2.2: ‘The *Encyclia* (457–458) of emperor Leo I.’

185 A hierarchical list of signatures (*ACO*, III, p. 66²³; Holubeanu, *Organizarea*, pp. 355–359, annex 9).

186 *CIC*, 3, *Novella* 65, p. 339^{7–9}.

187 *CIC*, 3, *Novella* 120, p. 588^{4–6}.

188 On the history of the bishopric of Odessos in the 4th–6th centuries, see below, chapter 5: ‘The historical stages of the see of Odessos from ordinary bishopric in Scythia to great metropolis of Moesia Secunda.’

Moesia Secunda, instead of Marcianopolis. Another relevant aspect is that in May 536, by organizing *quaestura exercitus Iustiniani*, Odessos became its capital-city.

The correlation of the data regarding Bosphorus, Chersonesus, Odessos, and *quaestura exercitus Iustiniani* leads to the conclusion that the reorganization of the ecclesiastical province of Scythia took place in May 536, during the reign of Justinian I. At that moment, ecclesiastical Scythia lost the see of Odessos, which became the new great metropolis of Moesia Secunda. Those of Bosphorus and Chersonesus, raised to the rank of autocephalous metropoleis (autocephalous archbishoprics), were also removed from the jurisdiction of Tomi and passed under that of the Church in Constantinople, on account of canon 28 of the Council of Chalcedon (451).¹⁸⁹ There is no clear information to establish if they continued to remain in the ecclesiastical province of Scythia or were transferred to a newly created ecclesiastical province (not known by its name), which included the episcopal sees of the cities situated northward of the Black Sea, under the control of the Roman Empire. Of the two possibilities, the first (being maintained in ecclesiastical Scythia) seems more probable.¹⁹⁰ However, it is certain that in May 536 the metropolis of Tomi lost all its old suffragan bishoprics. In these conditions, and for its canonical functioning, it had to be demoted to the rank of autocephalous archbishopric or receive new suffragan bishoprics. Archaeological discoveries, proving the organization of more episcopal sees in the cities of Roman Scythia in the second quarter of the 6th century, confirm the second hypothesis.¹⁹¹ These new suffragan sees were founded after November 534, when the *Codex of Justinian* certified for the last time the existence of only one episcopal see in Scythia (that of Tomi). At the same time, the extended administrative and church reorganization attested in the region in May 536 suggests that they were founded also at the last-mentioned date.

It remains to be explained when the see of Tomi became an autocephalous archbishopric. It is not possible that it received this rank before 381, as autocephalous archbishoprics (titular metropolitan sees) appeared on the basis of canon 12 of the Council of Chalcedon.¹⁹² In this case, Tomi could become an autocephalous archbishopric only by losing the rank of great metropolis. Such

189 Tanner, *Decrees*, pp. 99–100: “The metropolitans of the dioceses of Pontus, Asia and Thrace, but only these, as well as the bishops of these dioceses who work among non-Greeks, are to be ordained by the aforesaid most holy see of the most holy Church in Constantinople.”

190 On this matter, see below, subchapter 6.4: ‘The see of Chersonesus.’

191 See below, chapter 3: ‘The ordinary bishoprics on the territory of the Roman province of Scythia.’

192 See Chrysos, “Zur Entstehung,” pp. 263–286.

a downgrade could have taken place as a consequence of the destruction of the cities in Scythia and of the dissolution of their bishoprics after the inroads of the Avars and Slavs at the end of the 6th and the beginning of the following century.¹⁹³ Remaining without suffragan bishoprics, the see of Tomi could no longer have functioned as a great metropolis. In its attempt to save the existence of this see and of the church organization in the Lower Danube region, the heads of the Church of Constantinople decided to demote Tomi to the rank of an autocephalous archbishopric (autocephalous metropolis). Taking into account that this decision was motivated by an unfavourable historical context, Tomi was granted, as a compensatory act, a place of honour (the second position among autocephalous archbishoprics) in the Constantinopolitan church hierarchy.¹⁹⁴ The first position was reserved to the see of Odessos, which, in its turn, was demoted for the same reason.¹⁹⁵ As an autocephalous archbishopric, it is possible that the see of Tomi functioned until 681.¹⁹⁶

In what concerns the situation of the bishopric of Tomi before 381, it was most probably not integrated within the metropolitan-type organization system, and neither were those of Chersonesus and Bosphorus.¹⁹⁷ The hierarch of Tomi may have been elected by the body of priests (presbyterium) in Scythia, at that time.¹⁹⁸ The importance of this church body within the province is attested at the transfer of the relics of Saint Sabas the martyr. In the *Passion* of the saint it is specified that governor Junius Soranus of Scythia sent the relics to Cappadocia at “the wishes of the college of presbyters” (“διὰ θελήματος τοῦ πρεσβυτέρου”).¹⁹⁹ The text does not mention if the presbyterium under discussion

193 See above, ‘Introduction.’

194 Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum* 1.40, p. 205; 2.43, p. 217; 4.41, p. 250; 5.45, p. 265.

195 Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum* 1.39, p. 205; 2.42, p. 217; 4.40, p. 250; 5.44, p. 265.

196 On the existence of the city of Tomi between 614 and 680, see Sergeï Torbatov, *Ukrepiteľnata sistema na provinġiãa Skitiãa (Kraãa na III–VIIv.)* [The Defence System of the Late Roman Province of Scythia (The End of the 3rd–the 7th Century AD)] (Veliko Tarnovo: Faber, 2002), p. 193; Gheorghe Mănuco-Adameșteanu, “Tomis-Constantia-Constanța,” *Pontica* XXIV (1991), pp. 299–300 and 324.

197 See also Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur*, pp. 68 and 175–176; Chrysos, „Zur Entstehung,” p. 263.

198 On presbyterium in the early Church, see Emilian Popescu, “Qui est l’auteur de l’Acte du martyre de Saint Sabas « Le Goth »?” in *Études byzantines et post-byzantines*, 4, eds. Emilian Popescu and Tudor Teoteoi (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2001), pp. 12–14; Gary L. Coulter, *Juridical Manifestations of the Presbyterium*, [Tesi di Licenza] (Rome, 2004), pp. 8–10. Available at <https://frcoulter.com/presentations/presbyterium/index.html>. Accessed 2022 May 19.

199 *Passio S. Sabae Gothi* 8, in Hippolyte Delehaye, “Saints de Thrace et de Mésie,” *Analecta Bollandiana* 31 (1912), p. 221¹⁸; trans. Heather and Matthews, *The Goths*, p. 110.

is that of Roman Scythia (most probably) or that of trans-Danubian Gothia.²⁰⁰ Whatever the case may be, the existence of a body of priests with the bishop of Tomi as head in the Roman province is most plausible, especially given the conditions of the atypical church organization active there at that time. It is difficult to say if ordinary Christians (by their representatives) directly participated at the election of the bishop in Scythia, or their will was expressed via the priests in presbyterium. In what concerns the ordination of the bishop of Tomi, it must have taken place outside Scythia, in the episcopal centres on the territory of the Roman Empire that respected the Nicene doctrine.

200 Scholarly opinions differ on this matter. Some consider that the presbyterium is that of Roman Scythia—see Georg Pfeilschifter, “Kein neues Werk des Wulfila,” in *Festgabe Alois Knöpfler zur Vollendung des 60. Lebensjahres gewidmet*, eds. A. Biglmair et al., (Veröffentlichungen aus dem Kirchenhistorischen Seminar München) 3/1 (Munich: Lentner, 1907), pp. 203–204; Delehay, “Saints de Thrace,” p. 289; Joseph Mansion, “Les origines du christianisme chez les Gots,” *Analecta Bollandiana* 33 (1914), pp. 13–14; Zeiller, *Les origines*, p. 432; Henri Leclercq, “Goths,” in *Dictionnaire d’Archéologie chrétienne et de Liturgie*, VI/2, eds. Fernand Cabrol and Henri Leclercq (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1925), col. 1425; Ion Dinu, “Contribuțiuni la cunoașterea vlădicăi Bretanion ori Vetranion” [Contributions to the Knowledge of the Bishop Bretanion or Vetranion], *Tomis* 18 (1941), no. 12, p. 14; Nicolae Șerbănescu, “1600 de ani de la prima mărturie documentară despre existența Episcopiei Tomisului” [1600 Years since the First Documentary Attestation of the Bishopric of Tomi], *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 87 (1969), nos. 9–10, p. 1004; Vasile Gh. Sibiescu, “Sfântul Sava „Gotul.” La 1600 de ani de la mucenicia sa” [Saint Sabas „the Goth.” At 1600 Years since His Martyrdom], *Glasul Bisericii* 31 (1972), nos. 3–4, p. 374; Ștefan C. Alexe, “1600 de ani de la moartea Sfântului Sava Gotul” [1600 Years since the Death of Saint Sabas the Goth], *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 90 (1972), nos. 5–6, p. 561; Constantine Zuckerman, “Cappadocian Fathers and the Goths,” *Travaux et Memoires*, 11, eds. Gilbert Dagron and Denis Feissel (Paris: De Boccard, 1991), p. 476; Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române* [The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church], 1 (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1991), p. 112; Heather and Matthews, *The Goths*, pp. 109 (n. 39) and 113; Mario Girardi, *Saba il Goto—martire di frontiera: testo, traduzione e commento del dossier greco* (Iași: Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza,” 2009), pp. 15 and 32. Others consider that the presbyterium under discussion is that of trans-Danubian Gothia—see Gheorghe I. Moisescu, Ștefan Lupșa, and Alexandru Filipașcu, *Istoria Bisericii Române* [The History of the Romanian Church], 1 (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1957), p. 64; Petre Ș. Năsturel, “Les Actes de Saint Sabas le Goth (BHG³ 1607). Histoire et archéologie,” *Revue des études sud-est européennes* 7 (1969), no. 1, p. 178; Ioan Rămureanu, *Actele Martirice* [The Acts of the Martyrs], (Părinți și scriitori bisericești) 11 (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1982), pp. 315–316; Ralph W. Mathisen, “Barbarian Bishops and the Churches ‘in Barbaricis Gentibus’ during Late Antiquity,” *Speculum* 72 (1997), no. 3, p. 673, n. 55; Popescu, “Qui est l’auteur,” p. 15.

2.4 The Church Organization of Satrapiae and Inner Armenia (Great Armenia)

Scythia was not the only ecclesiastical province whose jurisdiction exceeded the limits of its civil province. Similar situations are attested through documents on the territories of the north-eastern part of the Roman Empire, at the border with the Sasanian Empire. Such cases will be presented here-below, as they facilitate a better understanding of church organization in the border regions of the empire.

Satrapiae was a territory situated between Inner Armenia (northward) (see below), the Roman provinces of Mesopotamia (southward), Armenia Prima and Armenia Secunda (westward), and the Sasanian Empire (eastward) (see Map 8).²⁰¹ The territory was divided into satrapies (Armenian autonomous principalities), which entered the Roman sphere of influence after the peace of Nisibis (298). An Armenian ruler (satrap) was leading every satrapy. His position was transmitted in a hereditary way, being recognized by the emperors in Constantinople who granted their regalia. The satrapies did not pay tribute to the empire and each of them had the right to have their own army. In Roman law, they originally had the status of *civitates foederatae liberae et immunes*. These sovereign rights declined after the Armenian rulers' support of the revolt against Emperor Zeno in 485. Thereafter, the satraps were appointed directly by the emperor and, as supposed, obliged to pay a tribute to the empire. In the year 529, Emperor Justinian I revoked all the rights of the satraps. In the year 536, he turned Satrapiae into a Roman province (Armenia Quarta).²⁰²

Several bishoprics functioned in Satrapiae (Anzitene, Arsamosata, Belabitone, Citharizon, Ingilene, Martyropolis, Sophene). Relevant for the present analysis is the fact that, even if situated outside the borders of the Roman Empire, they were part of the ecclesiastical province of Mesopotamia, as

201 On the history of Satrapiae, see Jones, *Cities*, pp. 223–225; Nina G. Garsoïan, “Satrapies,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, 3, eds. Alexander P. Kazhdan et al. (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 1846–1847.

202 On 529, see *Codex Iustinianus* 1.29.5, in Bruce W. Frier et al., eds., *The Codex of Justinian. A new Annotated Translation, with Parallel Latin and Greek Text*, 1 (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 344–347, and also Procopius Caesariensis, *De Aedificiis*, III.1.16–29, pp. 84¹⁹–86¹⁷; trans., pp. 183–187. On 536, see *CIC*, 3, p. 237^{6–18}; trans. Scott, and also Procopius Caesariensis, *De Aedificiis* III.1.16–29, pp. 84¹⁹–86¹⁷; trans., pp. 183–187.

suffragans of Amida metropolis. This situation is attested by documents throughout the 5th and 6th centuries.²⁰³

Another case of atypical church organization at the frontier of the empire is that of Inner Armenia (also known as Great Armenia), a region under Roman rule, without the status of a province. It existed in the eastern part of the diocese of Pontica before the year 536. Two bishoprics are attested in this region, one in Theodosiopolis/Anastasiopolis (now Erzurum, Turkey) and another one in Bazanis/Leontopolis/Justinianopolis (Turkey). Inner Armenia was organized as a civil province during the reign of Emperor Justinian I, by *Novella* 31 (18 March 536), being named Armenia Prima.²⁰⁴ Justinianopolis became the capital city of the newly created province, and Theodosiopolis was established as one of its cities.

The episcopal sees of the two cities were part of the ecclesiastical province of Cappadocia Prima at that time, as suffragans of the metropolis of Caesarea. This situation of the bishopric of Theodosiopolis is attested by the oldest *Notitiae*.²⁰⁵ The similar status of the see of Leontopolis scholars inferred from the lists of the Second Council of Constantinople (553).²⁰⁶ The two bishoprics

203 Ernst Gerland, *Corpus notitiarum episcopatum ecclesiae orientalis Graecae. I. Die Genesis der Notitia episcopatum. 1. Einleitung* (Istanbul: Socii Assumptionistae Chalcedonenses, 1931), pp. 45–46; Ernst Honigmann, “Studien zur Notitia Antiochena,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 25 (1925), p. 75; Honigmann, “The Original Lists,” pp. 45 and 76; Ernst Honigmann, *Évêques et évêchés monophysites d’Asie antérieure au VI^e siècle*, (*Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium*) 127 (Subsidia) 2 (Leuven: Durbecq, 1951), p. 102; Jones, *Cities*, p. 446, n. 15; Evangelos Chrysos, *Die Bischofslisten des v. ökumenischen Konzils (553)* (Bonn: Habelt, 1966), pp. 121–122; Fedalto, *Hierarchia Ecclesiastica*, 2, pp. 828–858; Richard Price and Michael Gaddis, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, 2, (Translated Texts for Historians) 45 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), pp. 232 and 236; 3, p. 300; Price, *The Acts*, 2, pp. 291–292 and 338.

204 This is the new province of Armenia Prima, created by *Novella* 31, different from the old homonymous province, whose metropolis was Sebasteia. Also, by *Novella* 31, Sebasteia became the metropolis of the newly created province of Armenia Secunda, whereas Melitene, the capital city of the old Armenia Secunda, became the metropolis of the newly created province of Armenia Tertia (see *CIC*, 3, pp. 235³²–237³³; trans. Scott). On the situation in Inner Armenia before the administrative reforms of Justinian I, see Jones, *Cities*, pp. 223–225; Ionuț Holubeanu, “The Ecclesiastical Organization in Armenia Interior in the 5th Century AD,” *Revista Română de Studii Eurasiatice/Romanian Review of Eurasian Studies* 13 (2017), nos. 1–2, pp. 253–266.

205 In *Notitiae* 1–4 and 7, in the rubric for the province of Cappadocia Prima, among the suffragans of the metropolitan of Caesarea appears the bishop of Theodosiopolis in Armenia (ὁ Θεοδοσιουπόλεως Ἀρμενίας) [see Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum* 1.76, p. 206; 2.91, p. 219; 3.98, p. 233 (without the mention Ἀρμενίας); 4.85, p. 251; 7.109, p. 274].

206 See Gerland, *Corpus notitiarum*, p. 46; Chrysos, *Die Bischofslisten*, p. 94. On the sees of Theodosiopolis and Leontopolis as part of the ecclesiastical Cappadocia Prima, see

may have been previously suffragans of the metropolis of Sebasteia, within the ecclesiastical province of Armenia Prima.²⁰⁷

Therefore, there are two cities (Leontopolis and Theodosiopolis) that did not belong to any of the provinces of the Roman Empire until the year 536, but whose bishoprics were part of the ecclesiastical province of Armenia Prima and, later, of Cappadocia Prima.

The church organization in Cappadocia Prima facilitates the understanding of another aspect related to the case of ecclesiastical Scythia. In the response letter of Metropolitan Alypius of Caesarea addressed to Emperor Leo I during the investigation of 457–458 (*Encyclia*), the Cappadocian hierarch mentioned the special situation of the church organization in his province. He pointed to the fact that there were only two bishops under his jurisdiction and one of them was ill at that time. That is why the debate of the proposed issues was not possible within the synod of the province (as required by the emperor), as the presence of at least three bishops was necessary to hold a synod. Alypius eventually had direct consultations with his suffragan from Nyssa (Musonius) and only read the written instructions sent by the sick bishop (Firminus of Therma). Afterward he wrote the response letter to the emperor.²⁰⁸

The Church in Cappadocia Prima arrived into this unusual situation following the administrative reorganization initiated by Emperor Valens at the beginning of the year 372. The old province of Cappadocia was then split into two distinct administrative units (Cappadocia Prima and Cappadocia Secunda). Thus, the metropolis of Caesarea lost a large part of its suffragan bishoprics. By this administrative measure, Valens also wanted to limit the influence of Basil the Great within the local Church.²⁰⁹

Gerland, *Corpus notitiarum*, pp. 45–46; Honigmann, “The Original Lists,” pp. 78–79; Chrysos, *Die Bischofslisten*, pp. 85–86 and 94; Jones, *Cities*, p. 446, n. 15; Fedalto, *Hierarchia Ecclesiastica*, 1, p. 421; Price, *The Acts*, 1, p. 186 (n. 13); 2, p. 289 (n. 7). Around the year 1028, the see of Leontopolis/Justinianopolis/Keltzene was subordinated to the metropolis of Kamachos (Armenia) (see Fedalto, *Hierarchia Ecclesiastica*, 2, p. 845).

207 See Le Quien, *Oriens christianus*, 1, col. 435–436; Holubeanu, “The Ecclesiastical Organization,” pp. 259–263.

208 *ACO*, II/5, pp. 75–77. The name of the sick bishop and that of his see are not mentioned in Alypius’ letter. However, they were identified based on the information taken from the documents of the Council of Chalcedon—see Holubeanu, “The Ecclesiastical Organization,” p. 259.

209 H. Hild, “Überblick über die geschichtliche und administrative Entwicklung,” in *Tabula Imperii Byzantini*, 2, *Kappadokien (Kappadokia, Charsianon, Sebasteia und Lykandos)*, eds. Friedrich Hild and Marcell Restle, (Österreichische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-Historische Klasse Denkschriften) 149 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1981), p. 67.

This case shows the necessity of at least three ordinary bishoprics within an ecclesiastical province, for its good functioning. The death of one of the bishops made it impossible for the other two to apply the provisions of canon 4 of the First Council of Nicaea (325), which imposed the election of a bishop by at least three of the hierarchs of each ecclesiastical province.²¹⁰ Moreover, it was impossible to organize the biannual provincial synods imposed by canon 5 of the same council if one of the hierarchs could not participate.²¹¹ This example reinforces the idea from the first part of the present study, which stated that, for the good functioning of ecclesiastical Scythia, at least three suffragan sees must have been transferred under the jurisdiction of Tomi in 381.²¹² Emperor Theodosius I, during whose reign this ecclesiastical province was organized, and his counsellors, must have taken this aspect into account.

After 457–458, the situation of the Church in Cappadocia Prima was improved as a result of the transfer of the bishoprics of Theodosiopolis and Justinianopolis in Inner Armenia under the jurisdiction of the metropolitan of Caesarea. This change is first attested in documents at the Second Council of Constantinople (553). There is no information available to identify the moment when it occurred. Still, considering the amplitude of this church reorganization, it can be attributed to one of the emperors in Constantinople from the interval 457/458–553.²¹³ The great distance existing between Caesarea and Theodosiopolis (c.630 km) is to be noted, which could be travelled only by land (a slow journey).²¹⁴ It was easier to travel by sea between Tomi and Chersonesus (c.450 km) and even Bosphorus (c.830 km).

The ecclesiastical dependence of the bishoprics in Satrapiae and Inner Armenia proves that the church organization could have been atypical in the border regions of the empire. The sees there functioned in cities or territories that were under Roman rule or influence, but not integrated into any

210 Tanner, *Decrees*, p. 7.

211 Tanner, *Decrees*, p. 8.

212 See above, subchapter 2.3.1: ‘The incipient structure of the ecclesiastical province of Scythia.’

213 He may have been Justinian I, who rebuilt the city of Leontopolis, thereafter called Justinianopolis. On this hypothesis, see Holubeanu, ‘The Ecclesiastical Organization,’ pp. 263–264.

214 The smallest distance on the present routes calculated by Google Maps between Kayseri (Caesarea) and Erzurum (Theodosiopolis) is 631 km; see <https://www.google.com/maps/dir/Kayseri,+Provincia+Kayseri,+Turcia/Erzurum,+Provincia+Erzurum,+Turcia/@39.3360438,36.1224525,7z/data=!3m1!4b1!4m13!4m12!1m5!1m1!1s0x152b0e1d3fa4a74f:0x84bd8c4d5a4c2da7!2m2!1d35.482597!2d38.720489!1m5!1m1!1s0x406e5f28a5eb94f1:0x10e3fd56abbfb86!2m2!1d41.2658236!2d39.9054993>. Richard Price (*The Acts*, 2, p. 289, n. 7) also emphasized the great distance existing between Caesarea and Justinianopolis.

of the civil provinces of the Roman Empire. However, they were affiliated to the ecclesiastical provinces of the region (Armenia Prima, Cappadocia Prima, Mesopotamia) in the church organizational plan. This aspect contributes to a better understanding of the situation of the sees on the northern coast of the Black Sea (Chersonesus, Bosphorus, and Phanagoria).²¹⁵

215 On the see of Phanagoria, see below, subchapter 6.6: 'The see of Phanagoria.'

The Ordinary Bishoprics on the Territory of the Roman Province of Scythia

Some data in Justinian I's code and the archaeological evidence in the territory of the former Roman province of Scythia allow for the establishing of the chronological span when the first ordinary bishoprics were organized there. Besides, the evolution of the ecclesiastical organization in the neighboring Roman province of Moesia Secunda suggests the development of the episcopal infrastructure in Roman Scythia even during the second half of the 6th century.

3.1 Justinian I's Code and Zeno's Law

At the beginning of his reign, Emperor Justinian I (527–565) ordered the compilation of a new collection of imperial constitutions. On 13 February 528, he appointed a commission of ten, including Tribonianus, at that time master of the offices (*magister officiorum*), and Theophilus, professor of law in Constantinople, to carry out the project. They finished the work in over a year. The Code was published on 7 April 529 and entered into effect on 16 April.¹ This collection of laws, however, has not survived.²

Since soon afterward this first Code was no longer a reliable guide to the statute law, Justinian I appointed a new commission of five to prepare the second edition of the collection. This time Tribonianus worked together with Dorotheus, professor of law at Berytus, and three lawyers who had previously drawn up the *Digest*. Their work was published under the title *Codex repetitae praelectionis* in November 534, and enforced from 29 December of the same year. This is the Justinianic code that has been preserved.³

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- 1 On the first edition of Justinian I's code, see Herbert Felix Jolowicz and Barry Nicholas, *Historical Introduction to the Study of Roman Law*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 479–480.
 - 2 It has been preserved a papyrus which contains fragments of an index of the first Code, see Jolowicz and Nicholas, *Historical Introduction*, p. 480, n. 1.
 - 3 On the second edition of Justinian I's code, see Jolowicz and Nicholas, *Historical Introduction*, pp. 493–496.

Of particular interest for the present investigation are the requirements addressed by Justinian I to both commissions of lawyers. The emperor asked the first commission to omit everything obsolete or unnecessary, to remove all contradictions and repetitions, to make additions and even changes in the former laws if necessary, and, where convenient, to put together several enactments:

We have given them [i.e., the persons appointed to compile the first Code] specific permission to cut away prefaces that are superfluous as regards the completeness of the laws, as well as all repetitions and contradictions unless they contain a legal distinction, as well as whatever has fallen out of use; and to arrange unambiguous and concisely worded laws out of the three Codices [i.e., *Gregorianus*, *Hermogenianus*, and *Theodosianus*] and the new constitutions, and to put them under appropriate titles; adding and striking out, even changing their words where the suitability of the material has required this; [13 February 528]⁴

Similarly, the emperor required the layers of the second commission to delete and discard from the first code any superfluous constitution, those repealed after April 529, leaving nothing repetitive, contradictory, or obsolete:

We have permitted the aforesaid magnificent and most learned men [i.e., the persons appointed to compile the second Code] to do all this, and, if there should be any need for correction, to make it unhesitatingly, bolstered by Our authority: to delete and discard from the collection of the prior Codex superfluous constitutions, or those repealed by Our subsequent decrees, or if any repetitions or contradictions are found; ... leaving nothing repetitive or contradictory or obsolete, [16 November 534]⁵

These requirements are valuable pieces of evidence that the Justinianic code of 534 (*Codex repetitae praelectionis*) contained only the constitutions and paragraphs of constitutions still being in use at that time. Some extant fragments of the index to the first Code gives definite proof that some new titles were

4 *The Codex of Justinian* Constitutio Haec. 2, in Bruce W. Frier et al., eds., *The Codex of Justinian. A New Annotated Translation, with Parallel Latin and Greek Text*, 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), pp. 2–5.

5 *The Codex of Justinian* De Emend. 3, pp. 10–13.

inserted and that individual constitutions were deleted as well as inserted in the second Code.⁶

Between the constitutions in Justinian I's code there is also a law issued by Emperor Zeno (476–491) sometime between 474 and 484, enforcing the existence of a bishopric in every settlement that had the city status ('*civitas*'/'πόλις'):

We decree that every city, whether restored to its former status or not previously a city, but declared a city by imperial benefaction, shall have a bishop, in every way unique and its own, to attend to ecclesiastical affairs therein. No one, by any means whatsoever, not even pursuant to a divine imperial command, may deprive any city whatsoever of its own bishopric or the territory established for it, or of any other right, and, in that respect or indeed in any other way, make it tributary to other cities.⁷

On the basis of Justinian I's requirements, it is to be inferred that Zeno's law in 474–484 was still in force in 534. It follows that it was continuously applied in all territories under the control of Constantinople not only when it was issued, but even during the next century. This reveals the great similarity between the administrative and ecclesiastical structures on the territory of the Roman Empire after the issuance of the law, and discloses the value of the civil lists, like those in the Hierocles' work *Synecdemus*, in establishing the evolution of the ecclesiastical organization in the Roman provinces after 474–484. In fact, the main issue in this regard consists in identifying the time when the settlements displayed in the civil lists had the city status and implicitly their own bishop.⁸

6 See Jolowicz and Nicholas, *Historical Introduction*, p. 495.

7 *The Codex of Justinian* 1.3.35-pr., pp. 98–99.

8 Considering the large number of cities attested in *Synecdemus*, the provisions of this law must have generated a real inflation of bishoprics in the Balkan Peninsula before the attacks of the Avars and Slavs at the end of the 6th century. The skepticism expressed by Louis Duchesne in this regard is unwarranted. Evaluating the data in Carl De Boor's *Notitia* (i.e., *Notitia* 3 in J. Darrouzès' edition) [Carl de Boor, "Nachträge zu den Notitiae episcopatumum (II)," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 12 (1891), pp. 520–534; Jean Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatumum ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae. Texte critique, introduction et notes*, (Géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire Byzantin) 1 (Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 1981), pp. 230–245], Duchesne argues that the paragraphs on Macedonia, Epirus Vetus, Epirus I, Thessalia II, Hellada, and Peloponesos in this document display the names of the cities ('*civitates*'/'πόλεις') in these provinces, but not those of the bishoprics [Louis Duchesne, "Les anciens évêchés de la Grèce," *Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* 15 (1895), pp. 379–385]. Although this view is very likely correct, the French scholar ignores the value of the civil lists in identifying the ecclesiastical structures. Actually, admitting in a purely hypothetical sense that those are bishoprics, Duchesne asserts that the only period when they could have been

In Zeno's law in Justinian I's code there is also a paragraph exempting the Roman province of Scythia from the imperial enactment:

Although We have decreed these provisions generally, We have also taken note of the state of the most holy churches under the jurisdiction of Tomis in the province of Scythia; and that it is impossible in any other way to save the aforesaid most holy churches, damaged by continuous barbarian incursions or otherwise afflicted by want, but that they should receive the foresight of the reverend bishop of Tomis, which city is also the capital of the province. We thus decree that they are excepted from the present imperial enactment and in no way subject to its compulsoriness, but shall remain in their own special form.⁹

This peculiar ecclesiastical organization in Scythia (an only see—that of Tomi—for the whole province) is also attested in other documentary sources by the 4th and 5th centuries.¹⁰ The preservation of this paragraph of Zeno's law in Justinian I's code in 534 is a piece of evidence that it was still in effect at that time. Otherwise, the commissions of lawyers who prepared the code ought to have discarded this clause. It excludes also the thesis supported by many scholars that the first ordinary bishoprics on the territory of the Roman Scythia had been organized under Anastasius I (491–518).¹¹ In fact, this latter view is also refuted by the archaeological discoveries in four Scythian cities, namely Tropaeum Traiani, Halmyris, Zaldapa, and Histria. At Tropaeum Traiani (now Adamclisi, Romania), the renovation of the 6th century cathedral ('B' basilica, also called 'marble basilica') and of the baptistery next to it is dated to the reign of Justinian I.¹² At Halmyris (now Murighiol, Romania), the construction of the

in existence is the time span between the second half of the 5th (*post* 458) and the end of the 6th century, but, quite surprisingly, he did not find any reason for such a large development of the episcopal infrastructure at the time, although he makes mention in his study of Zeno's law [Duchesne, "Les anciens évêchés," pp. 381 (n. 1), 384].

9 *The Codex of Justinian* I.3.35.2, pp. 100–101.

10 See above, subchapter 2.1: 'Tomi as the only see of Scythia as attested in documents.'

11 See above, chapter 1: 'Scholarly views on the evolution of the ecclesiastical organization of Roman Scythia,' n. 31.

12 Vasile Pârvan, *Cetatea Tropaeum. Considerații istorice* [The Fortress of Tropaeum. Historical Considerations] (Bucharest: Gutenberg, 1912), pp. 109–112; Carol Auner, "Dobrogea" [Dobruja], in *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie chrétienne et de Liturgie*, IV/1, eds. Fernand Cabrol and Henri Leclercq (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1920), col. 1252–1253; Radu Vulpe, *Histoire ancienne de la Dobroudja* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1938), p. 342; Ion Barnea, "Nouvelles considérations sur les basiliques chrétiennes de Dobroudja," *Dacia* 11–12 (1945–1947), p. 225; Ion Barnea, "Perioada Dominatului" [The Dominate], in

new annexes near the cathedral of the city occasioned by the organization of the local bishopric, as the scholars argued, is also dated to Justinian I's reign.¹³ At Zaldapa (now Abrit, Bulgaria), although the main basilica of the city (no. 3) was renewed under Anastasius I, the erection of the episcopal palace on its southern side is dated to a few decades later.¹⁴ The construction of the episcopal cathedral in Histria (now Istria, Romania) and of the *episcopium* there is also dated now to Justinian I's reign.¹⁵

Radu Vulpe and Ion Barnea, *Din istoria Dobrogei* [A History of Dobruja], 2 (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1968), pp. 470–471; Ion Barnea, *Christian Art in Romania*, 1 (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1979), pp. 160 and 162; Adrian Rădulescu, “Bazilicile creștine de la Axiopolis, Callatis și Tropaeum Traiani” [The Christian Basilicas of Axiopolis, Callatis, and Tropaeum Traiani], in *De la Dunăre la Mare. Mărturi istorice și monumente de artă creștină*, eds. Antim Nica et al. (Galați: Editura Arhiepiscopiei Tomisului și Dunării de Jos, 1979), pp. 93 and 95–96; Virgil Lungu, *Creștinismul în Scythia Minor în contextul vest-pontic* [The Christianity in Scythia Minor in the West-Pontic Context] (Sibiu/Constanța: T.C. Sen, 2000), pp. 73–74; Ioan Iațcu, *Construcții religioase creștine în provincia Scythia: secolele IV–VI p.Chr.* [Christian Religious Constructions in the Province of Scythia: The 4th–6th Centuries AD] (Brăila: Istros, 2012), pp. 96–97. A less accurate dating (Anastasius I–Justinian I) is supported by Ion Barnea (*Christian Art*, p. 162) and Ioana Bogdan Cătănicu [“The Marble Basilica (B) in Tropaeum Traiani,” *Dacia* [N.S.] 50 (2006), pp. 244, 249, and 252].

- 13 Mihail Zahariade, “The Halmyris Episcopal Basilica and the Martyrs’ Crypt,” *Il mar nero: annali di archeologia e storia* 5 (2001–2003), pp. 148–149; Mihail Zahariade, “The Episcopal Basilica from Halmyris and the Crypt of Epictetus and Astion,” *Thraco-Dacica* 1 (24) (2009), nos. 1–2, pp. 139–140. See also Mihail Zahariade and John Karavas, “A Fort of the Danubian Roman Frontier: Halmyris,” in *Culti e religiosità nelle province danubiane. Atti del II Convegno Internazionale Ferrara 20–22 Novembre 2013 a cura di Livio Zerbini*, eds. Laura Audino and Silvia Ripà (Bologna: Casa editrice Emil di Odoia, 2015), p. 583, where the organization of the bishopric of Halmyris is dated under Justinian I.
- 14 Georgi Atanassov and Yoto Valeriev, “La résidence épiscopale à proximité de la cathédrale de la ville romano-byzantine de Zaldapa dans la province de Scythie,” *Archaeologia Bulgarica* 24 (2020), no. 1, pp. 33–58.
- 15 Cathedral: Constantin Băjenaru, “Histria. „Basilica C”. Rezultate preliminare” [Histria. “C Basilica.” Preliminary Results], *Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche și Arheologie* 54–56 (2003–2005), pp. 151 and 164; Octavian Bounegru, “Analogies, utilisation et répartition de l’espace sacré,” in Alexandru Suceveanu, *Histria. Les résultats des fouilles. XIII. La basilique épiscopale* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2007), pp. 83–84; Iațcu, *Construcții*, p. 71; Robert Born, *Die Christianisierung der Städte der Provinz Scythia Minor ein Beitrag zum spätantiken Urbanismus auf dem Balkan*, (Spätantike—Frühes Christentum—Byzanz. Reihe B, Studien und Perspektiven) 36 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2012), p. 98. This dating was also supported for a while by Alexandru Suceveanu, “Cercetări recente în Histria creștină” [Recent Research in Christian Histria], in *Omagiu Virgil Cândea la 75 de ani*, 2, ed. Paul H. Stahl (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române/Roza Vânturilor, 2002), pp. 292–293. *Episcopium*: Octavian Bounegru and Virgil Lungu, “Histria. Cercetări recente în cartierul Domus” [Histria. Recent Explorations in the Domus District], *Studii*

To the present day, the archaeological discoveries suggest the existence of at least eight ordinary bishoprics on the territory of the former Roman province of Scythia: at Callatis, Histria, Argamum, Halmyris, Troesmis, Axiopolis, Tropaeum Traiani, and Zaldapa. The existence of three of these bishoprics, namely Histria, Callatis, and Tropaeum Traiani, is based upon more solid evidence, accepted today by the majority of scholars interested in the issue.¹⁶ At Histria, the cathedral of the city and the (supposed by ones) episcopal residence (*episcopium*) are known.¹⁷ The cathedral had a 60 m long axis, occupied

și *Cercetări de Istorie Veche și Arheologie* 54–56 (2003–2005), pp. 171, 174, and 177. Contra: Born, *Die Christianisierung*, pp. 99–104.

- 16 Contra: Dominic Moreau, “To Baptise in Late Antiquity—An Unfounded Episcopal Prerogative. Some Remarks Inspired by the ‘Scythian’ Case,” *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* 98 (2022), no. 1, pp. 99–104 and 117.
- 17 The existence of a bishopric at Histria is accepted by Emilian Popescu, “Contributions à la géographie historique de la Péninsule Balkanique aux v^e–viii^e siècles,” *Dacia* [N.S.] 13 (1969), p. 412, Emilian Popescu, “*Praesides, duces et episcopatus provinciae Scythiae* im lichte einiger inschriften aus dem 4. bis 6. JH.” in *Epigraphica. Travaux dédiés au VII-e Congrès d’épigraphie grecque et latine (Constantza, 9–15 septembre 1977)*, eds. Dionisie M. Pippidi and Emilian Popescu (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1977), p. 282, Emilian Popescu, “Organizarea ecleziastică a provinciei Scythia Minor în secolele IV–VI” [The Ecclesiastical Organization of the Province of Scythia Minor in the 4th–6th Centuries], *Studii Teologice* 23 (1980), nos. 7–10, pp. 601 and 603, Emilian Popescu, *Christianitas Daco-Romana. Florilegium studiorum* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1994), pp. 134–135 and 318–324, Emil Condurachi, “Problema unor basilici creștine de la Histria și Callatis” [The Problem of Some Christian Basilicas in Histria and Callatis], *Pontica* 4 (1971), pp. 181–182, Barnea, *Christian Art*, pp. 146 and 204, Lungu, *Creștinismul*, pp. 68 and 81, Virgil Lungu, “The Christian Scythia,” in Mihail Zahariade, *Scythia Minor. A History of a Later Roman Province (284–681)* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 2006), pp. 207 and 217, Virgil Lungu, “Levoluzione tipologica delle basiliche della Scythia Minor,” in *Cruce și misiune. Sfinții Împărați Constantin și Elena—promotori ai libertății religioase și apărători ai Bisericii*, 2, eds. Emilian Popescu and Viorel Ioniță (Bucharest: Basilica, 2013), p. 663, Bounegru and Lungu, “Histria,” pp. 167–178, Alexandru Madgearu, “The Church in the Final Period of the Late Roman Danubian Provinces,” in *Antiquitas Istro-Pontica. Mélanges d’archéologie et d’histoire ancienne offerts à Alexandru Suceveanu*, eds. Mircea Victor Angelescu et al. (Cluj-Napoca: Mega Éditions, 2010), p. 146, Manfred Oppermann, *Das frühe Christentum an der Westküste des Schwarzen Meeres und im anschließenden Binnenland: historische und archäologische Zeugnisse*, (Schriften des Zentrums für Archäologie und Kulturgeschichte des Schwarzmeerraumes) 19 (Langenweißbach: Beier & Beran, 2010), p. 70, Suceveanu, “Cercetări recente,” pp. 290–293, Suceveanu, *Histria*, passim, Alexandru Suceveanu, “La basilique épiscopale d’Histria,” in *Études byzantines et post-byzantines*, 6, eds. Emilian Popescu and Tudor Teoteoi, pp. 57–63, Nelu Zugravu, “Studiu introductiv, notițe bibliografice, note și comentarii” [Introductory Study, Biobibliographical Notes, Footnotes, and Comments], in Nelu Zugravu, ed., *Fontes Historiae Daco-Romanae Christianitatis* (Iași: Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza,” 2008), p. 126, Georgi Atanassov, “Christianity along the Lower Danube Limes in the Roman Provinces of Dacia Ripensis,

2 per cent of the fortified area of the city (7 ha) and was ornamented with an impressive quantity of marble from Thasos Island.¹⁸ The erection of such a large and luxurious basilica in a relatively small city as Histria only by the establishment there of an episcopal see become explicable. At that time there were in existence other four Christian basilicas (three intramural and one extramural) and a private chapel in Histria. At Callatis (now Mangalia, Romania), a stone cross with an inscription mentioning at least two bishops (most likely of the city) is known: “*Hic facta est oratio episcoporum Stefani ...*” (“Orisons have been raised in remembrance of the bishops called Stephen ...”).¹⁹ At Tropaeum

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- Moesia Secunda and Scythia Minor (4th–6th c. AD),” in *The Lower Danube Roman Limes (1st–6th C. AD)*, eds. Lyudmil Vagalinski, Nikolay Sharankov, and Sergey Torbatov (Sofia: NIAM-BAS, 2012), p. 360, Iațcu, *Construcții*, pp. 14, 29–30, 37, 41, 67–72, 126, 131–132, and fig. 1, Born, *Die Christianisierung*, pp. 98, 133–134, and 175 (map), Georgi Atanasov, Ioto Valeriev, and Valeri Yotov, “The Crypt in the Sanctuary of the Basilica No 3 at the Ancient City of Zaldapa (Province of Scythia),” *Niš i Vizantija/Niš & Byzantium* 15 (2017), p. 125, Atanasov and Valeriev, “La résidence épiscopale,” pp. 47–51, Dan Ruscu, “The Making of the Christian City in Scythia Minor,” *Classica et Christiana* 15 (2020), pp. 248–249 and 251.
- 18 On the cathedral and episcopal palace in Histria, see Popescu, *Christianitas*, pp. 318–324; Suceveanu, *Histria*, passim; Bounegru and Lungu, “Histria,” pp. 167–178; Iațcu, *Construcții*, pp. 67–72 and 132–152.
- 19 On stone cross with inscription, see Popescu, “*Praesides*,” pp. 277–281; Barnea, *Christian Art*, pp. 102–103, fig. 33. The existence of a bishopric at Callatis is accepted by Vasile Pârvan, “Nuove considerazioni sul vescovato della Scizia Minore,” *Atti della Pontificia Accademia Romana di Archeologia* 3, *Rendiconti* 2 (1923–1924), pp. 121 and 128, Popescu, “Contributions,” p. 412, Popescu, “*Praesides*,” pp. 277–283, Popescu, “Organizarea ecleziastică,” pp. 599 and 603, Popescu, *Christianitas*, pp. 132–133, Condurachi, “Problema unor basilici,” p. 182, Barnea, *Christian Art*, pp. 102, 134, and 136, Noël Duval, “L’archéologie chrétienne en Roumanie à propos de deux livres récents de I. Barnea,” *Revue archéologique* [N.S.] 2 (1980), p. 314, Adrian Rădulescu, “Bazilici și monumente creștine în contextul etnogenezei românești din sec. III–VII în Dobrogea” [Christian Basilicas and Monuments in Dobruja from the 3rd–7th Centuries in the Context of the Romanian Ethnogenesis], in *Monumente istorice și izvoare creștine. Mărturii de străveche existență și de continuitate a românilor pe teritoriul Dunării de Jos și al Dobrogei*, eds. Antim Nica et al. (Galați: Editura Arhiepiscopiei Tomisului și Dunării și Jos, 1987), pp. 13 and 47–48, Alexandru Barnea, “La Dobroudja aux IV^e–VII^e siècles de n.è.,” in Alexandru Suceveanu and Alexandru Barnea, *La Dobroudja Romaine* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1991), pp. 290–291, Valeriu Georgescu and Mihai Ionescu, “Mărturii creștine la Callatis” [Christian Testimonies at Callatis], *Pontica* 28–29 (1995–1996), pp. 187–188, Nelu Zugravu, *Geneza creștinismului popular al românilor* [The Genesis of Romanian Folk Christianity], (Bibliotheca Thracologica) 18 (Bucharest: Institutul Român de Tracologie, 1997), pp. 365–366, Nelu Zugravu, “Pour une prosopographie chrétienne du Bas-Danube (III^e–VII^e siècles),” *Peuce* [N.S.] 11 (2013), p. 298, Lungu, *Creștinismul*, pp. 68 and 81, Lungu, “The Christian Scythia,” pp. 206–207 and 217, Lungu, “Evoluzione tipologica,” p. 663, Oppermann, *Das frühe Christentum*, pp. 42 and 65, Madgearu, “The Church,” p. 146, Iațcu, *Construcții*, pp. 29–30, 41, 52, 131–32, 144, and fig. 1, Born, *Die Christianisierung*, pp. 135 and

Traiani, as already noted, the cathedral ('B' basilica) and the baptistery in its vicinity were uncovered.²⁰

This archaeological data proves that the peculiar ecclesiastical organization in Scythia ceased to exist at one point. Very likely, the disposition of Zeno's law concerning the special status of the ecclesiastical organization in Scythia became obsolete and the provisions of the law were applied to the whole territory of the province. It must have resulted in the establishment of bishoprics in all Scythian settlements having the city status (*'civitas'* / *'πόλις'*) at the time.

3.2 The Dating of the First Ordinary Bishoprics in Scythia

The data in the available sources allow a close dating of the first ordinary bishoprics in Scythia. A certain *terminus post quem* is just the publishing day of Justinian I's second code (16 November 534). In establishing a *terminus ante quem* of the event, the archaeological discoveries are valuable pieces of evidence. The last possible dating of the annexes near the episcopal cathedral in Halmyris, whose construction was occasioned by the organization of the local

175 (map), Nicolae Alexandru, "Creștinismul în lumina unor documente arheologice de la Callatis (Mangalia) în secolul al IV-lea" [Christianity in the Light of Some Archaeological Documents from Callatis (Mangalia) in the 4th Century], in *Cruce și misiune*, 2, p. 689, Atanasov and Valeriev, "La résidence épiscopale," p. 47.

20 On episcopal cathedral ('B' basilica) and the baptistery near it in Tropaeum Traiani, see Pârvan, *Cetatea Tropaeum*, pp. 93–112, Bogdan Cătănicu, "The Marble Basilica," pp. 235–254, and Iațcu, *Construcții*, pp. 95–97. The existence of a bishopric at Tropaeum Traiani is accepted by Pârvan, *Cetatea Tropaeum*, pp. 106–112, Pârvan, "Nuove considerazioni," pp. 121 and 130, Auner, "Dobrogea," col. 1252–1253, Vulpe, *Histoire ancienne*, pp. 341–342, Popescu, "Contributions," p. 412, Popescu, "Praesides," p. 282, Popescu, "Organizarea ecleziastică," pp. 600 and 603, Popescu, *Christianitas*, pp. 133–134, Barnea, "Perioada Dominatului," pp. 458–459 and 470–471, Barnea, *Christian Art*, p. 162, Condurachi, "Problema unor basilici," p. 182, Rădulescu, "Basilici și monumente," pp. 28–29, Barnea, "La Dobroudja," pp. 290–291, Lungu, *Creștinismul*, pp. 68 and 81, Lungu, "The Christian Scythia," pp. 207 and 217, Lungu, "Evoluzione tipologica," p. 663, Madgearu, "The Church," p. 146, Oppermann, *Das frühe Christentum*, p. 98, Iațcu, *Construcții*, pp. 29–30, 40, 96–97, 131, and fig. 1, Born, *Die Christianisierung*, pp. 122–123, 133–134, and 175 (map), Atanasov, "Christianity," p. 365, Atanasov and Valeriev, "La résidence épiscopale," pp. 47–48 and 51, Ruscu, "The Making," pp. 248–249. Georgi Atanasov and Yoto Valeriev argue that the episcopal ensemble (*'ἐπισκοπεῖον'*) of Tropaeum Traiani consisted of 'A' and 'D' basilicas and their annexes (see Atanasov, "Christianity," p. 365, n. 18, Atanasov and Valeriev, "La résidence épiscopale," p. 48).

bishopric (as it is assumed), is the middle of the 6th century.²¹ In this case, the organization of the first Scythian ordinary bishoprics must have occurred between 534 and 550.

In establishing a closer dating of the event, the extensive administrative and ecclesiastical reorganization in the western and northern territories on the Black Sea coast under the Roman rule during Justinian I's reign is important. In 536, a *quaestura exercitus* was organized, including the Roman provinces of Moesia Secunda and Scythia together with Caria, Cyprus, and Cyclades.²² In May of the same year, the see of Bosphorus (former Panticapaeum, now Kerch, in Crimea-Ukraine) was raised to the titular metropolitan rank. This is an important event on the issue given that the bishop of Bosphorus seems to have been subjected to the metropolitan of Tomi up to that moment.²³ Within the hierarchy of the Church of Constantinople, the primacy of the see of Chersonesus over that of Bosphorus suggests that it was also then, at the latest in 536, that the raise of Chersonesus to the rank of autocephalous archbishopric took place.²⁴ In 538, the bishopric of Odessos (now Varna, Bulgaria), also a former subject to the metropolitan see of Tomi, is attested for the first time as the great metropolis of Moesia Secunda. Very likely, Odessos was raised to this rank in 536 when the city became the seat of the *quaestura exercitus*.²⁵ Therefore, it is possible that 536 is also the year when the metropolitan see of Tomi acquired other suffragan sees that were organized in the main cities of the Roman Scythia. In this way, the canonical functioning of the Scythian metropolis was further fulfilled after it had lost all its former suffragan bishoprics.²⁶

It is also possible that by organizing the ordinary bishoprics in Scythia, Justinian I tried to improve the administrative and military organization in the

21 Zahariade, "The Halmyris Episcopal Basilica," pp. 148–49; Mihail Zahariade and Octavian Bounegru, "Despre începuturile creștinismului la Dunărea de Jos: *Martyrium*-ul de la Halmyris" [On the Beginnings of Christianity on the Lower Danube: The Martyrium of Halmyris], in *Izvoarele creștinismului românesc*, ed. Liliانا Naclad (Constanța: Editura Arhiepiscopiei Tomisului, 2003), p. 119; Zahariade, "The Episcopal Basilica," pp. 139–140.

22 On *quaestura exercitus*, see above, 'Introduction.'

23 On the see of Bosphorus, see below, subchapter 6.5: 'The see of Bosphorus.'

24 On the see of Chersonesus, see below, subchapter 6.4: 'The see of Chersonesus.'

25 On the see of Odessos, see below, chapter 5: 'The historical stages of the see of Odessos from ordinary bishopric in Scythia to great metropolis of Moesia Secunda.'

26 See the requirements of the 4th canon of the First Council of Nicaea (325)—Norman P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1 (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990), p. 7.

province in the circumstances in which the bishop had become an important factor in managing local affairs.²⁷

3.3 The First Ordinary Bishoprics in the Roman Province of Scythia

Keeping in mind the provisions of Zeno's law, the first ordinary bishoprics in Roman Scythia must have been organized in the settlements having the city status ('*civitas*/πόλις') at the time. Under these conditions, the civil and/or ecclesiastical lists mentioning the cities/bishoprics of the province are of utmost importance for the identification of the episcopal network organized in the province at the moment when the provision of this law on Scythia was abrogated. More specifically, under discussion is the paragraph on Scythia of Hierocles' *Synecdemus* and that of *Notitia episcopatum* 3.

Synecdemus offers a summary of a travel guide (bearing the same name) written around the middle of the 5th century on the basis of an official register.²⁸ It contains an enumeration of the cities ('*civitates*/πόλεις') on the

27 On the role of the bishops in the Roman cities during the 6th century, see Arnold Hugh Martin Jones, *The Later Roman Empire 284–602. A Social Economic and Administrative Survey*, 2 (Oxford: Blackwell, 1964), pp. 758–760; Gilbert Dagron, "Le Christianisme dans la ville byzantine," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 31 (1977), pp. 19–21; Gilbert Dagron, "Les villes dans l'Illyricum protobyzantin," in *Villes et peuplement dans l'Illyricum protobyzantin. Actes du colloque organisé par l'École française de Rome (Rome, 12–14 mai 1982)*, (Collection de l'École française de Rome) 77 (Roma: École française de Rome, 1984), pp. 14–18; Alain Ducellier, "Le problème des autonomismes urbains dans les Balkans: origines, continuités et ruptures (VI^e–XIII^e siècles)," in *Les origines des libertés urbaines (Actes des congrès de la Société des historiens médiévistes de l'enseignement supérieur public, 16^e congrès, Rouen, 1985)* (Rouen: Université de Rouen, 1990), pp. 126–127; Michel Pillon, "Armée et défense de l'Illyricum byzantin de Justinien à Héraclius (527–641). De la réorganisation justinienne à l'émergence des « armées de cité »,» *Erytheia* 26 (2005), pp. 40–41.

28 On *Synecdemus*, see Ernest Honigsmann, *Le Synecdémōs d'Hieroklès et l'opuscule géographique de Georges de Chypre: texte, introduction, commentaire et cartes*, (Corpus Bruxellense historiae Byzantinae. Forma imperii Byzantini) 1 (Brussels: Éditions de l'Institut de philologie et d'histoire orientales et slaves, 1939), pp. 1–48; Popescu, "Contributions," pp. 403–405 and 414–415; Arnold Hugh Martin Jones, *Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), pp. 514–521; Timothy E. Gregory, "Hierokles," in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, 2, eds. Aleksander P. Kazhdan et al. (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 930; Benet Salway, "Putting the World in Order," in *Ancient Perspectives. Maps and Their Place in Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece and Rome*, ed. Richard John Alexander Talbert (Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2012), pp. 228–230.

territory of the Eastern Roman Empire, grouped by dioceses and provinces. The writing of this work was dated to the beginning of the reign of Justinian I (c.527).²⁹ Even if Hierocles tried to update the information exposed in the old travel guide that he used as a source, errors and interruptions were identified in certain rubrics.³⁰ In what concerns the information exposed in the paragraph on Scythia, the majority of scholars accept its dating around the year 527.

The rubric on Scythia in *Synecdemus* mentions the names of the metropolis of Tomi and of 14 other cities: Tomi (Τόμις/Τόμης), Dionysopolis (Διονυσόπολις/Διονυσσόπολις), Akres (Ἄκραι), Callatis (Κάλλατις/Καλατίς), Histria (Ἴστρος), Constantiana (Κωνσταντιανὰ/Κωνσταντιαναί), Zaldapa (Ζέλδεπα/Ζελδέπα), Tropaeum Traiani (Τρόπαιον/Τρόπεις), Axiopolis (Ἀξιούπολις), Capidava (Καπίδαβα), Carsium (Κάρσος), Troesmis (Τρόσμις), Noviodunum (Νοβιόδουνον/Νοβιοδοῦνος), Aegyssus (Ἀγισσος), and Halmyris (Ἄλμυρίς).³¹ They are all well-known settlements also mentioned in other sources. Based on the dating of the rubric, it can be concluded that these were the cities of Roman Scythia around the year 527. Given the fact that they all managed to survive at least until the end of the 6th century, it can be assumed that all of them became episcopal sees between 534 and 550 (most likely in 536), when the provisions of Zeno's law on Scythia were abrogated.

The existence of bishoprics is suggested by the archaeological discoveries in the case of seven of these cities: Callatis, Histria, Tropaeum Traiani, Axiopolis, Troesmis, Halmyris, and Zaldapa. The archaeological discoveries from the first three centers listed here have already been noted (see above). In the case of the others, at Axiopolis (now Cernavodă, Romania), a basilica with a baptistery (with piscina) is known to have existed, while at Halmyris and Troesmis (now Turcoaia, Romania), the episcopal cathedrals of the cities have been

29 Most of the scholars dated Hierocles' *Synecdemus* to 527. A later dating (around the year 535) is offered by Raymond Janin, "La hiérarchie ecclésiastique dans le diocèse de Thrace," *Revue des études byzantines* 17 (1959), p. 139. Timothy Gregory ("Hierokles," p. 930) proposed the year 535 as a *terminus ante quem* of the writing of this work. On the other hand, Benet Salway ("Putting the World," p. 228) considered that *Synecdemus* exposed the administrative organization of the empire around the year 500.

30 See Jones, *Cities*, pp. 514–521; Cyril Mango and Ihor Ševčenko, "Three Inscriptions of the Reigns of Anastasius I and Constantine V," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 65 (1972), pp. 379–382.

31 Hierocles, *Synecdemus* 637.1–15, in Honigmann, *Le Synekdèmos*, pp. 13–14.

uncovered.³² Finally, at Zaldapa, as already noted, the cathedral and the episcopal palace are known.³³

The second important document for the identification of suffragan bishops of Roman Scythia is the paragraph on this province preserved in *Notitia episcopatum* 3. Even if there is no consensus among scholars concerning its

32 On the basilica with baptistery in Axiopolis, see Raymund Netzhammer, *Die christlichen Altertümer der Dobrudscha* (Bucharest: SOCEC & Co., 1918), pp. 123–124; Iațcu, *Construcții*, pp. 49 and 125. The existence of a bishopric at Axiopolis is accepted by Auner, “Dobrogea,” col. 1253, Pârvan, “Nuove considerazioni,” pp. 121 and 127, Popescu, “Organizarea ecleziastică,” pp. 600–601 and 603, Popescu, *Christianitas*, p. 134, Barnea, “Perioada Dominatului,” pp. 458–459, Barnea, “La Dobroudja,” pp. 290–291, Condurachi, “Problema unor basilici,” p. 182, Rădulescu, “Bazilici și monumente,” p. 12, Ventsislav Dintchev, “The Limit of Urban Life in the Late Antique Dioceses of *Thracia* and *Dacia*: The Overestimated Centers,” *Archaeologia Bulgarica* 4 (2000), no. 2, pp. 77–78, Lungu, *Creștinismul*, pp. 68 and 81, Lungu, “The Christian Scythia,” pp. 207 and 217, Lungu, “Evoluzione tipologica,” p. 663, Madgearu, “The Church,” p. 146, Oppermann, *Das frühe Christentum*, p. 98, Iațcu, *Construcții*, pp. 22–23 and fig. 1, and Born, *Die Christianisierung*, pp. 135 and 175 (map). On the episcopal cathedral in Halmyris, see Zahariade, “The Halmyris Episcopal Basilica,” pp. 143–168; Zahariade, “The Episcopal Basilica,” pp. 131–150; Iațcu, *Construcții*, pp. 57–60 (with bibliography). The existence of a bishopric at Halmyris is accepted by Barnea, “La Dobroudja,” p. 291 (map), Dintchev, “The Limit of Urban Life,” pp. 77–78, Zahariade, “The Halmyris Episcopal Basilica,” pp. 148–149, Lungu, “The Christian Scythia,” pp. 207 and 217, Madgearu, “The Church,” p. 146, Oppermann, *Das frühe Christentum*, p. 82, Iațcu, *Construcții*, pp. 22–23, 57, and fig. 1, Born, *Die Christianisierung*, p. 175 (map), Atanassov, “Christianity,” p. 365, Atanasov and Valeriev, “La résidence épiscopale,” p. 48. On the episcopal cathedral in Troesmis, see Iațcu, *Construcții*, p. 89 (with bibliography). The existence of a bishopric at Troesmis is accepted by Emilian Popescu, *Inscripțiile grecești și latine din secolele IV–XIII descoperite în România* [The Greek and Latin Inscriptions from the 4th to 13th Centuries Discovered in Romania] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1976), pp. 246, Condurachi, “Problema unor basilici,” p. 182, Victor H. Baumann, “De la Turcoaia la Niculițel. Mărturii și monumente vechi creștine” [From Turcoaia to Niculițel. Ancient Christian Testimonies and Monuments], in *De la Dunăre la Mare. Mărturi istorice și monumente de artă creștină*, eds. Antim Nica et al. (Galați: Editura Arhiepiscopiei Tomisului și Dunării de Jos, 1979), p. 112, Rădulescu, “Bazilici și monumente,” p. 24, Barnea, “La Dobroudja,” pp. 185 and 291 (map), Zugravu, *Geneza*, p. 371, Dintchev, “The Limit of Urban Life,” pp. 77–78, Lungu, *Creștinismul*, pp. 74 and 81, Lungu, “The Christian Scythia,” pp. 207 and 217, Zahariade, *Scythia Minor*, p. 110, Madgearu, “The Church,” p. 146, Iațcu, *Construcții*, fig. 1, Born, *Die Christianisierung*, pp. 135 and 175 (map), Atanassov, “Christianity,” p. 365, Atanasov and Valeriev, “La résidence épiscopale,” pp. 47–48 and 51.

33 Atanasov, Valeriev, and Yotov, “The Crypt,” pp. 123–132; Atanasov and Valeriev, “La résidence épiscopale,” pp. 33–53. The existence of a bishopric at Zaldapa is accepted by Popescu, “Organizarea ecleziastică,” pp. 602–604, Atanassov, “Christianity,” p. 365, Atanasov, Valeriev, and Yotov, “The Crypt,” pp. 123–124, Atanasov and Valeriev, “La résidence épiscopale,” pp. 33–58, Barnea, “La Dobroudja,” p. 291 (map), Oppermann, *Das frühe Christentum*, p. 108, Iațcu, *Construcții*, fig. 1, and Born, *Die Christianisierung*, p. 175 (map).

administrative or ecclesiastical nature (see below), given the provisions of Zeno's law, it is useful for the identification of the local episcopal centres. The rubric mentions, in a more or less altered form, the name of the metropolis of Tomi and of 14 other cities/bishoprics: Tomi (Τόμη μητρόπολις—metropolis of Tomi), Axiopolis (ὁ Ἀναξιουπόλεως), Capidava (ὁ Καπηδάου), Bipainon (ὁ Βιπαίνου), Carsium (ὁ Κούπρου), Noviodunum (ὁ Νικομηδέου), Aegyssus (ὁ Δέσου), Salsovia (ὁ Σαλσοβίας), Halmyris (ὁ Ἄλμυρίου), Tropaeum Traiani (ὁ Τροπαίου), Zaldapa (ὁ Ζελδίπας), Dionysopolis (ὁ Διονυσουπόλεως), Callatis (ὁ Καλάτου), Histria (ὁ Ἰστρίου), and Constantiana (ὁ Κωνσταντιάνων).³⁴

Of the names presented in the paragraph above, Bipainon (ὁ Βιπαίνου) has posed identification problems.³⁵ Emilian Popescu considered that it is Beroe, suggesting that the evolution of the alteration was 'Beroe' → 'Birainon/Βιραίνον' → 'Bipainon/Βιπαίνον' ('Bipainou/Βιπαίνου,' in the genitive case).³⁶ Radu Vulpe proposed the cities of Troesmis or (L)Ibida, without giving any argument for this choice.³⁷ Of these hypotheses, the most plausible is the first one (Beroe). It is to be noted that in the paragraph of *Notitia* 3 the cities/bishoprics are mentioned in geographical order, Bipainon being placed in the group of cities on the Danubian *limes* (Axiopolis, Capidava, Carsium, Aegyssus, Salsovia, and Halmyris). This aspect pleads against its identification with (L)Ibida, which was a settlement inside the province. In this case, Bipainon would have been

34 Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum* 3.40.642–565, p. 242.

35 Alexandru Barnea ("La Dobroudja," p. 185) did not exclude the possibility for the name Kouprou to be an altered form of Troesmis.

36 Popescu, "Praesides," p. 282, Popescu, "Organizarea ecleziastică," p. 604, Popescu, *Christianitas*, p. 137. For the identification of Bipainon-Beroe, see also Barnea, "La Dobroudja," pp. 183 and 307 (n. 222); Zugravu, *Geneza*, p. 366; Alexandru Suceveanu, "Contribuții la istoria orașelor romane din Dobrogea. Note de geografie istorică" [Contributions to the History of Roman Cities from Dobrogea. Notes of Historical Geography], *Historia Urbana* 1 (1993), no. 2, p. 147; Alexandru Suceveanu and Iuliana Barnea, "Contributions à l'histoire des villes romaines de la Dobroudja," *Dacia* [N.S.] 37 (1993), p. 178; Sergei Torbatov, *Ukrepitel'nata sistema na provintsiū Skitiū (Kraīa na III–VII v.)* [The Defence System of the Late Roman Province of Scythia (The End of the 3rd–the 7th Century A.D.)] (Veliko Tarnovo: Faber, 2002), p. 119; Madgearu, "The Church," p. 146; Atanassov, "Christianity," p. 360; Iațcu, *Construcții*, p. 30.

37 Vulpe, *Histoire ancienne*, p. 341, n. 1. For the identification of Bipainon-Troesmis, see also Mihai Sâmpetru, *Orașe și cetăți romane târzii la Dunărea de Jos* [Towns and Cities on the Lower Danube in Late Antiquity], (Bibliotheca Thracologica) 5 (Bucharest: Institutul Român de Tracologie, 1994), p. 108, Zugravu, *Geneza*, p. 366, Zahariade, *Scythia Minor*, p. 91, and Iațcu, *Construcții*, p. 30. For the identification of Bipainon-(L)Ibida, see also Barnea, "La Dobroudja," p. 204, Suceveanu, "Contribuții," p. 147, Suceveanu and Barnea, "Contributions," p. 178, Zugravu, *Geneza*, p. 366, Atanassov, "Christianity," pp. 360 and 362, Iațcu, *Construcții*, p. 30, Dorel Paraschiv and Mihaela Iacob, "(L)Ibida christiana," *Îndrumător Pastoral—Episcopia Tulci* 6 (2014), p. 357.

found next to Zaldapa and Tropaeum Traiani. In what concerns the alteration of the name Troesmis to Bipainon, given the visible difference between the two names, it is less probable than the transformation of Beroe to Bipainon.

In these conditions, *Notitia* 3 features 13 of the cities mentioned in *Synecdemus*: (Tomi, Dionysopolis, Callatis, Histria, Constantiana, Zaldapa, Tropaeum Traiani, Axiopolis, Capidava, Carsium, Noviodunum, Aegyssus, and Halmyris); Akres (Kaliakra Cape, Bulgaria) and Troesmis are missing; and in addition appear Salsovia (now Mahmudia, Romania) and Beroe (Piatra Frecăței, Romania).³⁸

Furthermore, the dating of the protograph that served as a source for the rubric in *Notitia* 3 needs to be clarified. It is certainly prior to the end of the 6th or the beginning of the 7th century, when Salsovia and Beroe were destroyed by the barbarians and abandoned.³⁹ At the same time, it is to be noted that in the rubric of *Notitia* 3, (L)Ibida and Argamum are not mentioned at all. They were raised to the rank of cities and became episcopal centres in the third quarter of the 6th century (see below). The year 527 may be established as a *terminus post quem*, as Salsovia and Beroe are not mentioned in *Synecdemus*. In this case, the protograph must have been written in the second quarter or in the first years of the third quarter of the 6th century. At that time, Salsovia and Beroe had the status of cities and, implicitly, that of episcopal centres.

Moreover, Salsovia and Beroe are not listed by Procopius of Caesarea among the settlements fortified by Justinian I. However, the raising to the rank of cities involved their extended renovation. In this case, they may have been rebuilt under Anastasius I, when an intense activity of reconstruction is attested in Scythia, and raised to the city status after 527, at the beginning (first decade?)

38 The existence of a bishopric at Salsovia is accepted by Barnea, "La Dobroudja," p. 291 (map), Dintchev, "The Limit of Urban Life," p. 78, Torbatov, *Ukrepitelnata sistema*, p. 157, and Iațcu, *Construcții*, pp. 29–30 and fig. 1. The existence of a bishopric at Beroe is accepted by Popescu, "Praesides" p. 282, Popescu, "Organizarea ecleziastică," p. 604, Popescu, *Christianitas*, p. 137, Barnea, "La Dobroudja," p. 291 (map), Lungu, *Creștinismul*, p. 81, Lungu, "The Christian Scythia," p. 207, Torbatov, *Ukrepitelnata sistema*, p. 119, Born, *Die Christianisierung*, p. 175 (map), and Atanasov, Valeriev, and Yotov, "The Crypt," p. 130.

39 On the end of Beroe, see Dumitru Vâlceanu and Alexandru Barnea, "Ceramica lucrată cu mâna din așezarea romano-bizantină de la Piatra Frecăței (secolul al VI-lea e.n.)" [Hand-Made Pottery from the Early Byzantine Settlement at Piatra Frecăței (6th Century AD)], *Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche și Arheologie* 26 (1975), no. 2, p. 215; Torbatov, *Ukrepitelnata sistema*, p. 120. On the end of Salsovia, see Torbatov, *Ukrepitelnata sistema*, p. 158. No extended archaeological excavations have been conducted at the remains of Salsovia and Beroe so far. Therefore, there is no archaeological evidence regarding the dating of these bishoprics.

of Justinian I's reign.⁴⁰ It is not excluded that they may have already had the rank of cities, and became, in their turn, episcopal centres at the moment of the foundation of the first ordinary bishoprics in Roman Scythia (536).

In what concerns the absence of the cities/bishoprics of Troesmis and Akres from the paragraph on Scythia in *Notitia* 3, it is, most probably, the result of the omission of a compiler or a copyist. These settlements existed without interruption until the end of the 6th century.⁴¹ Therefore, the dissolution of their bishoprics during the reign of Justinian I is less probable. On the other hand, a closer look into *Notitiae episcopatum* reveals numerous omissions and mistakes found in these documents. This is something that can be noticed also in the rubric on Scythia in *Notitia* 3, where a good number of cities/bishoprics are mentioned in an altered form: Anaxioupolis for Axiopolis, Bipainon for Beroe, Coupros/Coupron for Carsium, Nicomedeon for Noviodunum, Desos for Aegyssus. The evaluation of the information exposed in the rubrics on Moesia Secunda in the old *Notitiae* also lead to the conclusion that none of these is complete, omitting names of certain cities/bishoprics.⁴²

3.4 The Bishoprics of (L)Ibida and Argamum

As one can see, there were in existence 16 fortified settlements with the city status on the territory of the Roman province of Scythia at the middle of the 6th century. Nine of them (Axiopolis, Capidava, Carsium, Beroe, Troesmis, Noviodunum, Aegyssus, Salsovia, and Halmyris) were located on the Danube frontier of the empire, five (Dionysopolis, Akres, Callatis, Histria, and Constantiana) on the Black Sea coast, and two inland (Tropaeum Traiani and Zaldapa) (see Maps 3 and 4). Thus, the Scythian province had a very high density of urban centers at the time, especially along the bank of the Danube.

However, the fortified area of most of the cities was small. As a matter of fact, Capidava had c.1.3 ha at the time, Constantiana (now Enisala, Romania) c.1.7 ha, Salsovia c.1.8 ha, Halmyris c.2 ha, Axiopolis c.2.3 ha, and Aegyssus c.2.5 ha. It is to be noted that, except Constantiana, these small cities were located on the Danube border of the empire. Histria (c.7 ha), Tropaeum

40 This viewpoint is also supported by Sâmpetru, *Orașe și cetăți*, pp. 108–109, and Torbatov, *Ukrepitel'nata sistema*, p. 157.

41 See Barnea, "La Dobroudja," pp. 184–185 and 198; Torbatov, *Ukrepitel'nata sistema*, pp. 121–129 and 226–232.

42 See Ionuț Holubeanu, *Organizarea bisericească în Scythia și Moesia Secunda în secolele IV–VII* [The Ecclesiastical Organization in Scythia and Moesia Secunda in the 4th–7th Centuries] (Bucharest: Basilica, 2018), pp. 143–181.

Traiani (c.9 ha), Noviodunum (c.11.5 ha), Carsium (c.20 ha), Akres (c.25 ha), and Zaldapa (c.25 ha) were more extended. Only the fortified area of the metropolis Tomi exceeded 60 ha.⁴³

This aspect raises the question of why these small settlements were granted city status? The answer is important on the issue because it could clarify yet another aspect, namely: Is it possible that other settlements of the province acquired the city status (and implicitly their own bishopric) during the second half of the 6th century?

The most important pieces of evidence in answering these questions are the paragraphs in Theophylact Simocatta's *History* concerning the events that took place at Asemus during the reign of Maurice (582–602).⁴⁴ Asemus (Osamsko Kale, near now Cherkovitsa, Pleven Province, Bulgaria) was a small fortress (1.15 ha) of the Roman province of Moesia Secunda, located on the Danube frontier of the empire.⁴⁵ Describing the events there in the year 594, in which the commander of the Roman army Peter (Emperor Maurice's brother) and the citizens of Asemus were involved, Theophylact Simocatta stated that the Emperor Justin II⁴⁶ had granted the city the right to have its own army, by a decree (νόμος).⁴⁷ This aspect stands out given that the Roman state of Late Antiquity was very wary of anything that looked like private militias and reluctant to arm the civilians.⁴⁸

43 See Torbatov, *Ukrepitelnata sistema*, pp. 100–101, 103, 115, 149, 153, 157, 159, 166, 176–177, 189, 228, 301, and 319.

44 Theophylact Simocatta, *Historiae* VII.3.1–10, eds. Carl de Boor and Peter Wirth (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1972), pp. 249²⁰–251⁸; *The History of Theophylact Simocatta*, trans. and notes Michael Whitby and Mary Whitby (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 182–183.

45 On Asemus, see Sergey Torbatov, “Anasamus/Ansamus/Ἀσημοῦς/Ἀσήμος (antichnite selishtni i fortifikatsionni ostanki kraï ustieto na r. Osŭm)” [Anasamus/Ansamus/Ἀσημοῦς/Ἀσήμος (The Roman, Late Roman, and Early Byzantine Settlement and Fortification Remains near the Osam River's Mouth)], *Bulgarian e-Journal of Archaeology* 6 (2016), pp. 21–79.

46 Although Theophylact Simocatta did not specify whether it was Justin I (518–527) or Justin II (565–574), given that he never made mention of Justin I in his work and he made no further clarification in this regard in this paragraph, one would to assume that here Justin II was meant. On this issue, see also Haralambie Mihăescu, “Indice și note” [Index and Notes], in Teofilact Simocata, *Istorie bizantină* [The History of Theophylact Simocatta] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1985), p. 137, n. 8, Pillon, “Armée et défense,” p. 39, and especially Holubeanu, *Organizarea*, pp. 185–189.

47 Theophylact Simocatta, *Historiae* VII.3.4, p. 250^{5–8}; trans. p. 182: “And so the citizens and the city's garrison produced a decree of the emperor Justin which granted the city this successive armed protection.”

48 See Pillon, “Armée et défense,” p. 34.

Sergey Torbatov has argued that the decree issued on behalf of Asemus was a *lex civitatis*.⁴⁹ This means that Emperor Justin II had raised Asemus to the city status and, under this new condition, it had acquired the right to have its own bishop and a standing army.⁵⁰ This shapes a policy of militarization of the small settlements in order to achieve greater defensive efficiency.

Michel Pillon, based on the case of Asemus and another one in Appiaria (now Ryahovo, Bulgaria), also in Moesia Secunda, concluded that the military defense system of the Roman Empire was provided by both the regular army of the empire and those of the cities during the 6th century.⁵¹ Emperor Justinian I strongly supported the spread of this kind of military defense system in his effort to ensure a better defensive of the empire against the barbarian attacks. In the events of Asemus, just the imperial army and the local troops were involved.

This military policy also explains why so many border settlements in the Danubian provinces, including Scythia, acquired city status. In fact, as in the case of Asemus, the authorities in Constantinople tried to ensure there the best military defense using as few imperial troops as possible. Besides, having in mind the case of Asemus, which became a city under Justin II, it is possible that other fortresses also acquired this status and implicitly their own bishopric during the second half of the 6th century, even in Scythia.

49 Torbatov, "Anasamus," p. 28. This view is also supported by Pillon, "Armée et défense," p. 40.

50 Theophylact Simocatta (*Historiae* VII.3.6 and 8, p. 250¹², 27-28) makes mention of a bishop in Asemus. General Peter's desire to punish him proves that he was the hierarch of the city (and not a refugee), being considered the main culprit for the events that took place there. Very likely, the see of Asemus had been organized (on the ground of the Zeno's law in 474-484) when the settlement had attained the city status. Bishop of Asemus: Petăr Mutafchiev, *Bulgares et Roumains dans l'histoire des pays danubiens* (Sofia: Danov, 1932), pp. 122-123 and 126-127; Gheorghe I. Brătianu, *Privilèges et franchises municipale dans l'Empire Byzantin* (Paris: Geuthner, 1936), pp. 60-61; John Bagnell Bury, *A History of the Later Roman Empire*, 2 (New York: Dover Publications, 1958), p. 133; Armin Hohlweg, "Bischof und stadther im frühen Byzanz," *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 20 (1971), p. 58; Velizar Velkov, *Cities in Thrace and Dacia in Late Antiquity (Studies and Materials)* (Amsterdam: Hakert, 1977), p. 247; Dagron, "Le Christianisme," p. 21; Mihaescu, "Indice și note," p. 195; Peter Schreiner, "Städte und Wegenetz in Moesien, Dakien und Thrakien nach dem Zeugnis des Theophylaktos Simokates," in *Spätantike und frühbyzantinische Kultur Bulgariens zwischen Orient und Okzident*, ed. Renate Pillinger (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1986), p. 29; Peter Schreiner, "Das Christentum in Bulgarien vor 864," *Miscellanea Bulgarica* 5 (1987), p. 52; Torbatov, "Anasamus," p. 28, n. 22; Pillon, "Armée et défense," pp. 39-40. A refugee bishop: Whitby and Whitby, *The History of Theophylact Simocatta*, p. 183, n. 14; Madgearu, "The Church," p. 148.

51 Pillon, "Armée et défense," pp. 35 ff. On the local armies (riparian troops) on the Danube (Scythia implicitly), see also Zahariade, *Scythia Minor*, pp. 234-235.

On the basis of documentary and archaeological evidence, some scholars have argued for the existence of bishoprics at (L)Ibida and Argamum. (L)Ibida (now Slava Rusă, Romania) was a large fortified settlement (c.24 ha).⁵² It had a certain importance as it was situated on the main road crossing the interior of the province from south to north (see Map 3).⁵³

In his *The Buildings*, Procopius labeled (L)Ibida as a city (‘πόλις’).⁵⁴ It is the only place where the Byzantine historian used this term describing Justinian I’s

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- 52 The existence of a bishopric at (L)Ibida is accepted by Condurachi, “Problema unor basilici,” p. 182, Barnea, “La Dobroudja,” p. 204 [if Bipainon in *Notitia* 3 is an altered form of (L)Ibida], Sâmpetru, *Orașe și cetăți*, p. 109, Lungu, *Creștinismul*, p. 81, Lungu, “The Christian Scythia,” p. 207, Mihaela Iacob, “Le trésor de solidi romans-byzantins découvert à Ibida (Scythie Mineure),” in *Simpozion de Numismatică dedicat centenarului Societății Numismatice Române (1903–2003): Chișinău, 26–28 noiembrie 2003/comunicări, studii și note*, eds. Eugen Nicolae et al. (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2005), p. 79, Atanassov, “Christianity,” p. 365, Mihaela Iacob, Antonio Ibba, Dorel Paraschiv, and Alessandro Teatini, “La città romana di (L)Ibida, in Scythia Minor. Le ricerche recenti e l’accordo di collaborazione tra l’Istituto di Ricerche Eco-Museali di Tulcea e l’Università di Sassari,” in *Culti e religiosità nelle province danubiane. Atti del 11 Convegno Internazionale Ferrara 20–22 Novembre 2013 a cura di Livio Zerbini*, eds. Laura Audino and Silvia Ripà (Bologna: Casa editrice Emil di Odoja, 2015), p. 563 [if Bipainon is an altered form of (L)Ibida], Madgearu, “The Church,” p. 146, Iațcu, *Construcții*, fig. 1, Paraschiv and Iacob, “(L)Ibida christiana,” p. 357 [if Bipainon is an altered form of (L)Ibida]. Alexandru Barnea (“La Dobroudja,” p. 179) also accepts the raising of (L)Ibida to the rank of city (*civitas*/πόλις).
- 53 On (L)Ibida, see Torbatov, *Ukrepitelnata sistema*, pp. 281–286; Mihaela Iacob, “La circulation monétaire à (L)Ibida (Scythie Mineure) du v^e siècle au début du vii^e siècle,” in *Byzantine Coins in Central Europe between the 5th and 10th Century. Proceedings from the Conference Organised by Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences and Institute of Archaeology University of Rzeszów under the Patronage of Union Académique Internationale (Programme No. 57 Moravia Magna) Kraków, 23–26 IV 2007*, ed. Marcin Wołoszyn, (Moravia Magna. Seria Polona) 3 (Kraków: Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences; Rzeszów: Institute of Archaeology, University of Rzeszów, 2009), pp. 61–79; Iacob, Ibba, Paraschiv, and Teatini, “La città romana di (L)Ibida,” pp. 559–574; Mihaela Iacob, “Le monete raccontano la storia di una città. Il caso della Polis Ibida,” in *Numismatica e Archeologia. Monete, stratigrafie e contesti. Dati a confronto. Workshop Internazionale di Numismatica*, eds. Giacomo Pardini et al. (Roma: Edizioni Quasar, 2018), pp. 241–247.
- 54 Procopius Caesariensis, *De Aedificiis* IV.7.19, in Procopius Caesariensis, *Opera omnia*, 4, eds. Jakob Haury and Gerhard Wirth (München/Leipzig: Saur, 2001), p. 133^{11–13}; Procopius of Caesarea, *On Buildings* IV.7.19, in Procopius, *On Buildings, History of the Wars, and Secret History*, 7, trans. Henry Bronson Dewing (London: William Heinemann; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 283: “Beyond this [i.e., Ulmetum] is the city of Ibida, whose circuit-walls had suffered in many places: these he [i.e., emperor Justinian I] renewed without delay and made the city very strong.”

constructions in Scythia.⁵⁵ This can be seen as an argument for the importance the fortress had in the contemporary provincial fortification system, and suggests that the emperor raised the status of (L)Ibida to a city. Its urban character is suggested also by a bath edifice (thermae) that was built *ex integro* at the time.⁵⁶

Archaeological research has confirmed the restoration of (L)Ibida undertaken under Justinian I. It was established that the reconstruction work started after the inroad of the Kutrigurs in 559.⁵⁷ Given that Procopius finished *The Buildings* in 560–561, those last years can be seen as the latest moment when (L)Ibida acquired the city status and implicitly its own bishopric.⁵⁸

55 A similar case can be seen in Moesia Secunda, where the only settlement referred to by Procopius as city (‘πόλις’) is Theodoropolis, whose name came from that of the empress Theodora (see Procopius Caesariensis, *De Aedificiis* IV.7.5, p. 131^{20–21}; trans., p. 281).

56 Iacob, Ibba, Paraschiv, and Teatini, “La città romana di (L)Ibida,” p. 569.

57 Iacob, Ibba, Paraschiv, and Teatini, “La città romana di (L)Ibida,” p. 569; Iacob, “Le monete raccontano,” p. 243.

58 G. Downey, “The Composition of Procopius’ *de Aedificiis*,” *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 78 (1947), p. 181; Michael L. Whitby, “Procopius’ Description of Martyropolis (de Aedificiis III. 2. 10–14),” *Byzantinoslavica* 45 (1984), no. 2, p. 181; Michael L. Whitby, “Justinian’s Bridge over the Sangarius and the Date of Procopius’ *de Aedificiis*,” *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 105 (1985), pp. 129–148; Torbatov, *Ukrepitelnata sistema*, p. 37; Piotr Ł. Grotowski, *Prokopiusz z Cezarei, O budowlach (Peri ktismaton)* (Warsaw: Prószyński i S-ka, 2006), pp. 62–64; Denis Roques, *Procope de Césarée. Constructions de Justinien 1^{er}* (Alessandria: Edizioni dell’Orso, 2011), pp. 52–59; Atanassov, “Christianity,” p. 363. Although most of the scholars date the completion of *De Aedificiis* in 553–554 [see Ernest Stein, *Histoire du Bas-Empire*, 2 (Paris/Brussels/Amsterdam: Desclée de Brouwer, 1949), p. 837; Berthold Rubin, “Prokopios von Kaisareia,” in *Paulys Real-Encyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, XXIII/1 (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1957), col. 573–574; Gyula Moravcsik, *Byzantinoturcica*, 1, 3rd ed. (Leiden: Brill, 1983), p. 491; Geoffrey Greatrex, “The Dates of Procopius’ Works,” *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 18 (1994), pp. 107–113; Geoffrey Greatrex, “The Date of Procopius’ Buildings in the Light of Recent Scholarship,” *Estudios bizantinos* 1 (2013), pp. 13–29; Geoffrey Greatrex, “Perceptions of Procopius in Recent Scholarship,” *Histos* 8 (2014), pp. 101–103; Averil Cameron, *Procopius and the Sixth Century* (London/New York: Routledge, 1996), pp. 10–11; Paolo Cesaretti and Maria Luigia Fobelli, *Santa Sofia di Costantinopoli: un tempio di luce (De Aedificiis I, 1, 1–78)* (Milan: Jaca Book; Vicenza: Gallerie di Palazzo Leoni Montanari, 2011), pp. 15–19; Federico Montinaro, “Byzantium and the Slavs in the Reign of Justinian: Comparing the Two Recensions of Procopius’s Buildings,” in *The Pontic-Danubian Realm in the Period of the Great Migration*, eds. Vujadin Ivanišević and Michel Kazanski (Paris: Association des amis du Centre d’histoire et civilisation de Byzance; Belgrade: Arheološki Institut Beograd, 2012), pp. 104–105], the dating of the renovation of (L)Ibida after the inroad of the Kutrigurs in 559 (see above, n. 57) argues for 560–561.

So far at (L)Ibida the remains of a monumental basilica located in the central area of the city have been partially unearthed.⁵⁹ It is one of the largest in the province (around 22 m width).⁶⁰ A varied range of decorative marble elements as bases, columns, and capitals, as well as pieces of liturgical apparatus (pilasters, small columns, and finials of the chancel) have been found. They were manufactured from Proconnesus, Aphrodisias, and Naxos marble. The pavement of the monument was made in mosaic.⁶¹ The high cost of the materials and the techniques to process them suggest that the construction of the edifice was financed by the imperial treasury. Although there is no consensus among scholars on the date of the basilica,⁶² some of them recently argued in favor of an extended decorative program, dating to the reign of Justinian I, which was successfully implemented at (L)Ibida.⁶³ It is very likely that after the raising of the fortress to the city status in 560–561, this basilica became the episcopal cathedral.

Some scholars today argue also for the existence of a bishopric at Argamum in the 6th century.⁶⁴ Argamum/Orgame (Doloșman Cape, Romania) was the largest antique fortified settlement on the bank of Razim Lake (formerly a bay at the Black Sea).⁶⁵ By the middle of the 6th century, it covered approximately 2.5 ha.

Argamum had a strategic position, controlling the shipping traffic between the Black Sea and the Razim-Sinoe Lagoon through the Mouth of Portița. This was a route to the Danube Delta area and the northern inland region of Scythia (see Maps 3 and 5).⁶⁶ The fortress is not listed either in Hierocles' *Synecdemus* or in the paragraph of Scythia in *Notitia* 3. This proves that it did not have the city status in the first half of the 6th century. In his *The Buildings*, Procopius

59 On the basilica of (L)Ibida, see especially Iațcu, *Construcții*, pp. 72–73; Dorel Paraschiv and Ioan Iațcu, “The Christian Basilica of Ibida. Elements of Interior Decoration,” *Arheologia Moldovei* 36 (2013), pp. 239–252.

60 The definite length of the basilica remains unknown.

61 Iațcu, *Construcții*, pp. 72–73; Paraschiv and Iațcu, “The Christian Basilica,” pp. 239–252.

62 See Iațcu, *Construcții*, p. 73.

63 Paraschiv and Iațcu, “The Christian Basilica,” p. 244.

64 Condurachi, “Problema unor basilici,” p. 182; Barnea, “La Dobroudja,” pp. 192 (urban settlement) and 291 (map); Lungu, *Creștinismul*, p. 81; Lungu, “The Christian Scythia,” pp. 207 and 217; Madgearu, “The Church,” p. 146; Iațcu, *Construcții*, p. 131 and fig. 1; Atanasov and Valeriev, “La résidence épiscopale,” pp. 47–49 and 51.

65 On Argamum, see Monica Mărgineanu Cârstoiu and Mihaela Mănucu-Adameșteanu, “Zidul de incintă romano-bizantin de la Argamum: un tronson din curtaină de est” [The Early Byzantine Enclosure Wall of Argamum: A Section of the Eastern Curtain], *Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche și Arheologie* 49 (1998), nos. 3–4, pp. 233–258; Torbatov, *Ukrepitel'nata sistema*, pp. 170–173.

66 See Mărgineanu Cârstoiu and Mănucu-Adameșteanu, “Zidul de incintă,” p. 233, n. 1.

listed Argamum between the settlements fortified by the Emperor Justinian I.⁶⁷ The information is confirmed by the archaeological research. The settlement managed to survive until the second decade of the 7th century, when it was destroyed and abandoned.

The remains of four Christian basilicas have been uncovered at Argamum, three intramural and one extramural.⁶⁸ All the intramurals had baptisteries with piscina. In the middle of the 6th century, following a natural disaster (an earthquake or a landslide), a new defensive wall was built on the east side of the fortress. This caused the reconstruction of the main basilica (no. 11). A new altar apse with synthronon was erected, slightly shifted to the west of the old apse. Subsequently, a few annexes (a baptistery with piscina and three other rooms) were built near the south wall of the edifice. The synthronon and the baptistery suggest that the shrine was designed as an episcopal basilica.⁶⁹

The natural disaster that severely affected the fortress was identified with the earthquake of 543. It has been inferred that the construction of the new east wall of the fortress and the renovation of the great basilica were completed in the years immediately following the disaster.⁷⁰ Thus, Argamum may have been raised to the city status and, consequently, became an episcopal see, either at the time, just before the middle of the 6th century, or a little later, when the annexes (the supposed episcopal palace) on the south side of the great basilica were built.

3.5 Other Possible Ordinary Bishoprics in the Roman Province of Scythia

It is possible for other settlements in the Roman Scythia to have attained the city status and thus become episcopal sees in the second half of the 6th century, before the inroads of the Avars and Slavs that caused the downfall of the Danubian *limes*. Assessing the archaeological findings at Timum (now

67 Procopius Caesariensis, *De Aedificiis* IV.11.20, p. 149¹³; trans., p. 315.

68 On basilicas in Argamum, see P. Nicoresco, "Les Basiliques Byzantines de Dolojman," *Bulletin de la Section Historique de l'Académie Roumaine* 25 (1944), no. 1, pp. 95–101; Barnea, "Nouvelles considérations," p. 227; Barnea, *Christian Art*, pp. 148–149; Lungu, *Creștinismul*, p. 74; Iațcu, *Construcții*, pp. 44–49 and 114.

69 Atanasov and Valeriev (pp. 47–48) argue that the three rooms near the south wall of basilica were the bishop's palace. The existence of a bishopric at Argamum is also accepted by Oppermann, *Das frühe Christentum*, p. 70, and Born, *Die Christianisierung*, p. 175 (map).

70 Mărgineanu Cârstoiu and Mănucu-Adameșteanu, "Zidul de incintă," p. 254.

Bulgarevo, Bulgaria) (see Maps 3 and 5),⁷¹ Sergey Torbatov has considered the possibility that the fortress acquired the city status at a certain time.⁷² The fortified area of Timum amounted to c.6–7 ha. A basilica was uncovered in the central part of the settlement, having decorative marble elements. A capital and several fragments of slabs from the apse of the altar were extracted from its remains.⁷³

Two other possible Scythian settlements that could have acquired the city status around the middle or in the second half of the 6th century are Ulmetum and Sacidava. Ulmetum (now Pantelimon, Romania) was a fortified settlement located in the inland of Scythia (see Maps 3 and 5).⁷⁴ Its fortified area amounted to c.1.50 ha. It had a certain importance due to its strategic position at the junction of the road crossing Scythia from south to north and the one from east to west, connecting the maritime city of Histria with the Danube city of Carsium or that of Capidava.

Ulmetum was rebuilt under Justinian I after it had been destroyed by the Huns and abandoned in the second half of the 5th century. Procopius in *The Buildings* referred to the reconstruction, which has also been attested by archaeological research.⁷⁵ The Byzantine historian labelled Ulmetum as

71 On Timum, see Torbatov, *Ukrepitelnata sistema*, pp. 232–238.

72 Torbatov, *Ukrepitelnata sistema*, p. 237.

73 Goranka Toncheva, “Küde sa se namirali gradovete Timogifsiña i Timium?” [Where Were the Cities of Timogetia and Timium?], *Istoricheski pregled* 26 (1970), no. 6, pp. 91–92; Torbatov, *Ukrepitelnata sistema*, p. 234.

74 On Ulmetum, see Vasile Pârvan, “Cetatea Ulmetum (I). Descoperirile primei campanii de săpături din vara anului 1911” [The Fortress of Ulmetum (I). The Discoveries of the First Excavation Campaign in the Summer of 1911], *Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile Sesiunii Istorice* 11/34 (1912), pp. 575 ff.; Vasile Pârvan, “Cetatea Ulmetum (II). Descoperirile campaniei a doua și a treia de săpături din anii 1912 și 1913” [The Fortress of Ulmetum (II). The Discoveries of the Second and Third Excavation Campaigns in 1912 and 1913], *Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile Sesiunii Istorice* 11/36 (1913–1914), pp. 329–404; Vasile Pârvan, “Cetatea Ulmetum (III). Descoperirile ultimei campanii de săpături din vara anului 1914” [The Fortress of Ulmetum (III). The Discoveries of the Last Excavation Campaign in the Summer of 1914], *Analele Academiei Române. Memoriile Sesiunii Istorice* 11/37 (1915), pp. 265–304; Barnea, “La Dobroudja,” pp. 202–204; Torbatov, *Ukrepitelnata sistema*, pp. 288–297; Constantin Băjenaru, “Pantelimonu de Sus, com. Pantelimon, jud. Constanța [Ulmetum]” [Pantelimonu de Sus, Pantelimon Commune, Constanța County (Ulmetum)], *Cronica* (2008), pp. 218–219. The existence of a bishopric at Ulmetum is accepted by Lungu, *Creștinismul*, p. 81.

75 Procopius Caesariensis, *De Aedificiis* IV.7.17–18, p. 133^{4–11}; trans., p. 283: “Beyond this [i.e., Sanctus Cyrillus fortress] from ancient times there was a stronghold (ἄχυρωμα), Ulmitôn by name, but since the barbarian Sclaveni (i.e., early Slavic tribes) had been making their ambushes there for a great length of time and had been tarrying there very long, it had come to be wholly deserted and nothing of it was left except the name. So he [i.e.,

‘ὄχυρωμα’ (‘stronghold’).⁷⁶ In the same paragraph of Scythia, he designated Sanctus Cyrillus, Aegyssus, and Halmyris as ‘φρούρια’ (‘fortresses’) and (L)Ibida, as already noted, as ‘πόλις’ (‘city’). However, these terms are not very indicative if one considers that Aegyssus and Halmyris are listed in *Synecdemus* and *Notitia* 3 as cities (see above). But, even so, it can be deduced from Procopius’ exposition that the imperial authorities were aware of the strategic military importance of Ulmetum in Scythia.

At Ulmetum, the remains of a basilica (c.23.70 × 11.50 m) were discovered, located in the south-east sector of the fortress.⁷⁷ It was erected in the first half of the 5th century and rebuilt under Justinian I. Two new annexes with an apse along their east side were also built at the time. They flanked the apse of the church to the north and south. There were other annexes on the south side of the edifice.⁷⁸ However, the plan of the entire basilica complex in the 6th century and the function of the annexes are not readily apparent. It remains to be seen if the next archaeological research will provide arguments in favor of the existence of an episcopal complex (‘ἐπισκοπεῖον’) there.⁷⁹

Keeping in mind the general historical context at the Lower Danube under Justinian I, Sergey Torbatov dated the reconstruction of Ulmetum in the years after 551.⁸⁰ The possible raising of this fortress to the city rank and the organization of its bishopric could have taken place after the inroad of the Kutrigurs in 559, as in the case of (L)Ibida. In fact, by renovating (L)Ibida and

Justinian I] built it all up from the foundations and thus freed that region from the menace and the attacks of the Sclaveni.”

- 76 Mihail Zahariade (*Scythia Minor*, p. 140) characterizes Ulmetum as a small urban settlement.
- 77 On basilica in Ulmetum, see Lungu, *Creștinismul*, p. 75; Băjenaru, “Pantelimonu de Sus,” 2008, pp. 218–219; Constantin Băjenaru, “Pantelimonu de Sus, com. Pantelimon, jud. Constanța [Ulmetum]” [Pantelimonu de Sus, Pantelimon Commune, Constanța County (Ulmetum)], *Cronica* (2010), pp. 137–138; Iațcu, *Construcții*, pp. 100–101.
- 78 Lungu, *Creștinismul*, p. 75; Iațcu, *Construcții*, pp. 100–101.
- 79 As already noted, Georgi Atanasov has argued that the annex on the south side of the cathedral basilica (no. 3) in Zaldapa was an episcopal palace. The Bulgarian scholar has also argued that the annex on the south side of the main basilica (no. 11) in Argamum was an episcopal palace. Other scholars also have argued that the annexes on the east side of the main basilica in Troesmis had the function of episcopal palace [see Baumann, “De la Turcoaia la Niculițel,” p. 112; Rădulescu, “Bazilici și monumente,” p. 24; Lungu, *Creștinismul*, p. 74; Iațcu, *Construcții*, p. 89; Atanasov, “Christianity,” pp. 365–366 and 370 (fig. 23); Atanasov and Valeriev, “La résidence épiscopale,” pp. 47–48]. In fact, given that many of the Scythian cities had a small fortified area, it is expected that their episcopal complexes (‘ἐπισκοπεῖα’) were not very large, at least in some cases.
- 80 Sergey Torbatov, “Quaestura exercitus: Moesia Secunda and Scythia under Justinian,” *Archaeologia Bulgarica* 1 (1997), no. 3, pp. 83 ff.; Torbatov, *Ukrepitelnata sistema*, p. 297. See also Băjenaru, “Pantelimonu de Sus,” 2008, p. 218.

Ulmelum, the imperial authorities intended, most likely, to secure the northern half of the central road of Scythia, which was a continuation of the road from Constantinople and Marcianopolis.

As for Sacidava (now Dunăreni, Romania), it was a fortress amounted to c.1.60 ha, located on the Danube frontier of the empire, near the border between Scythia and Moesia Secunda (see Maps 3 and 5).⁸¹ The fortress was restored at the end of the 5th–beginning of the 6th centuries and in the second half of the 6th century. So far, there is not any conclusive evidence that Sacidava acquired the city status at some stage of its development. Its name is not referred to either in Hierocles' *Synecdemus* or in *Notitia* 3. Besides, there is no consensus among scholars whether Σκεδεβά (Skedeba) in Procopius' *The Buildings* is Sacidava or a fortress of Moesia Secunda.⁸²

The only aspect that could be taken into account in this regard is the reinforcement of the towers in the second half of the 6th century. Specifically,

81 On Sacidava, see Constantin Scorpan, "Sacidava și unele probleme stratigrafice și cronologice ale limesului și Dobrogei romane (secolul v e.n. în arheologia dobrogeană)" [Sacidava and Some Stratigraphic and Chronological Issues of the Lower Danube Roman Border and the Roman Dobruja (The 5th Century AD in the Archaeology of Dobruja)], *Pontica* 5 (1972), pp. 301–327; Constantin Scorpan, "Date arheologice referitoare la secolele VI și VII pe teritoriul Dobrogei (Rezultate inedite la Tropaeum și Sacidava)" [Archaeological Data of the 6th and the 7th Centuries on the Territory of Dobruja (Unpublished Discoveries at Tropaeum and Sacidava)], *Pontica* 5 (1972), pp. 358–372; Constantin Scorpan, "Săpăturile arheologice de la Sacidava 1969, 1970, 1971" [Archaeological Excavations at Sacidava in 1969, 1970, and 1971], *Pontica* 6 (1973), pp. 267–331; Constantin Scorpan, "Sacidava—A New Roman Fortress on the Map of the Danube Border," in *Actes du IX^e Congrès d'études sur les frontières romaines, Mamaia, 6–13 septembre 1972*, ed. Dionisie M. Pippidi (Bucharest/Cologne/Wien: Editura Academiei Române, 1974), pp. 109–116; Constantin Scorpan, "Rezultate ale săpăturilor arheologice de la Sacidava, 1974–1976" [Results of the Archeological Excavations at Sacidava, 1974–1976], *Pontica* 10 (1977), pp. 229–251; Constantin Scorpan, *Limes Scythiae. Topographical and Stratigraphical Research on the Late Roman Fortifications on the Lower Danube*, (BAR International Series) 88 (Oxford: BAR Publishing, 1980), pp. 50–74; Constantin Scorpan, "Sacidava—An Unusual Design and Construction Method," in *Roman Frontier Studies 1979*, eds. W.S. Hanson and L.J.F. Keppie, (BAR International Series) 71 (1–111) (Oxford: BAR Publishing, 1980), pp. 787–798; Mihail Zahariade, *Moesia Secunda, Scythia și Notitia Dignitatum* [Moesia Secunda, Scythia, and Notitia Dignitatum] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1988), pp. 119–121; Barnea, "La Dobroudja," pp. 179–180; Torbatov, *Ukrepitelnata sistema*, pp. 88–95. On an evaluation of Constantin Scorpan's conclusions, see Petre Diaconu, "Despre Sacidava și 'stratigrafia' ei" [On Sacidava and Its 'Stratigraphy'], *Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche și Arheologie* 31 (1980), no. 1, pp. 123–130. On the area of Sacidava, see Torbatov, *Ukrepitelnata sistema*, p. 89 and n. 21.

82 Procopius Caesariensis, *De Aedificiis* IV.11.20, p. 148⁴⁸; trans., p. 315. On identification of Skedeba, see Zahariade, *Moesia Secunda*, p. 120; Barnea, "La Dobroudja," p. 179; Torbatov, *Ukrepitelnata sistema*, p. 88, n. 18.

the defense wall was doubled inside the fortress next to the towers and the insides of the towers were filled with soil and construction debris.⁸³ These were explained by the need to create large platforms in order to place on them powerful ballistic devices (catapults).⁸⁴ The use of these catapults offers evidence for the existence of a standing local army at Sacidava at the time, as in the case of Asemeus, but not just a militia. This implicitly suggests the raising of the fortress to the city status in the second half of the 6th century.

It is also to be noted that the archaeological research carried out at Sacidava between 1969 and 1980 were not very extensive. New archaeological works have started in 2020. It remains to be determined whether they will offer any conclusive evidence in favor of the existence of an episcopal see there in the second half of the 6th century.

3.6 The Character of the Scythian Paragraph in *Notitia* 3

There is no consensus among scholars on the character of the paragraph of the province of Scythia in *Notitia* 3. Louis Duchesne argues that it displays the names of the cities (*'civitates/πόλεις'*) in the province, while Emilian Popescu those of the bishoprics.⁸⁵ However, given that a clarification of this aspect could allow for a closer dating of the information presented in this list, in the next few lines a short survey on the issue is offered.

The scholars who have asserted the civil character of the paragraph put forward the argument that Tomi was the only bishopric in existence on the territory of the Roman province of Scythia. However, as already noted, this state of things (the so-called “Scythian exception”) ended sometime after 534. Therefore, the hypothesis that the names of the bishoprics of the province are listed in *Notitia* 3 is acceptable.

In their turn, the scholars who have argued for the ecclesiastical character of the list put forward few data about the existence of some ordinary bishops

83 Scorpan, “Rezultate ale săpăturilor,” pp. 232–235; Torbatov, *Ukrepitelnata sistema*, p. 94.

84 Torbatov, *Ukrepitelnata sistema*, p. 94.

85 Cities: Duchesne, “Les anciens évêchés,” pp. 380–381, followed by Jacques Zeiller, *Les origines chrétiennes dans les provinces danubiennes de l'empire romain* (Paris: De Boccard, 1918), p. 170, Honigmann, *Le Synekdèmos*, pp. 3–5, Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum*, pp. 28–29, Madgearu, “The Church,” p. 145, and Moreau, “To Baptise,” pp. 100–101. Bishoprics: Popescu, “Contributions,” pp. 403–415; Popescu, “Organizarea ecleziastică,” pp. 597–605; Popescu, *Christianitas*, pp. 124–138. Popescu's view is also supported by almost all the scholars who accepted his dating of the first ordinary bishoprics in Roman Scythia.

under the metropolitan of Tomi and the archaeological discoveries. But these do not also completely exclude the first hypothesis.

A hint that could allow a deeper insight into the issue is the title of the paragraph of Scythia in *Notitia* 3. This is a kind of geographical characterization of the province: “ἐπαρχία Σκυθίας παραθαλασσία τοῦ Πόντου” (“the province of Scythia, lying on the [Black] Sea coast”).⁸⁶

As one can see, it points out the maritime character of Scythia. However, given that the province was bordered by the Black Sea on its east side, but not on a very long coast compared to Pontus Polemoniacus, the characterization seems somewhat surprising. The title could find a better explanation if one considers that Scythia was bordered by the Danube on its northern and western sides and the river may have been seen as an extension of the Black Sea.

But this name can also be associated with the geographical structure of the ecclesiastical province of Scythia until 536. In fact, between 381 and 536, all its sees, namely Tomi, Odessos, Chersonesus, and very likely Bosporus and, for a while, Phanagoria (now Sennoy, Krasnodar Krai, Russia) had been located on the Black Sea coast.⁸⁷ Thus, half of the western and all the northern coast of the Black Sea under Roman rule was under its jurisdiction. Therefore, it is possible to have been this structure of the ecclesiastical province of Scythia that had inspired the geographical characterization above, that was in use even after 536.

If such an interpretation is correct, then it argues for the ecclesiastical character of the Scythian paragraph in *Notitia* 3.

The second aspect that could be taken into account is the paragraph of the metropolitan see of Odessos in the same *Notitia*. As in the case of the Scythian, Louis Duchesne argued that it has a civil character, being couched in the information displayed in Hierocles’ *Synecdemus*.⁸⁸ However, in a recent investigation, the ecclesiastical character of this paragraph has been established. Specifically, it displays in an altered form the structure of the ecclesiastical province of Moesia Secunda in 536, when the see of Odessos was raised to the status of a great metropolis instead of Marcianopolis.⁸⁹

86 Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum* 3.40.642, p. 242.

87 On Phanagoria as a suffragan bishopric of Tomi, see below, subchapter 6.6: ‘The see of Phanagoria.’

88 Duchesne, “Les anciens évêchés,” p. 380, followed by Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum*, p. 31.

89 Holubeanu, *Organizarea*, pp. 64–66, 165–181, and 205–233, followed by Dominic Moreau, Radu Petcu, and Ivan Gargano, “Christianisme et organisation ecclésiastique dans le bas Danube,” *Dossiers d’archéologie* 40 (2021), p. 72 (as a possibility), and Alexander Minchev, “Marcianopolis in the 2nd–6th Centuries AD. From a Roman City to a Late

This aspect is very important on the issue. In fact, it reveals that soon after the ecclesiastical reorganization in Moesia Secunda in 536, a *Notitia episcopatum* was drawn up in Constantinople, setting forth the new state of things in this Danubian province. It is possible that in a copy of this old document, which the compiler of *Notitia* 3 had at his disposal, a paragraph of Scythia with 14 (in fact 16, with Troesmis and Akres) episcopal sees was also displayed. From there he could copy it, together with the paragraph of the metropolis of Odessos.

In such a case, 536 is the year when Odessos was raised to the rank of great metropolis and, also, when the first ordinary bishoprics (including Salsovia and Beroe) were organized and attested on the territory of the Roman province of Scythia.

As already noted, such a dating is also suggested by the fact that the bishoprics of (L)Ibida, Argamum and those of the hypothetical Timum, Ulmetum, and Sacidava were not listed in the paragraph of Scythia in *Notitia* 3. This reveals that the protograph of the paragraph of Scythia was certainly drawn up prior to the middle of the 6th century. On the other hand, it is consistent with the mention of Beroe and Salsovia, which, renewed under Anastasius I, could be raised to the status of cities in the first decade of Justinian I's reign. The hypothesis also explains the differences between the paragraph of Scythia in *Notitia* 3, where Beroe and Salsovia are listed, and that in *Synecdemus*, where the names of these two cities are missing.

3.7 Conclusions

The above investigation allows for the following conclusions:

1. The first ordinary bishoprics on the territory of the Roman province of Scythia were organized between 534 and the middle of the 6th century. In all likelihood, the event occurred in 536, when a large civil and ecclesiastical reorganization was undertaken by Justinian I in the western and northern territories on the Black Sea coast under Roman rule;
2. In the beginning, at least 14 ordinary sees were set up. They were located in the Scythian cities listed in Hierocles' *Synecdemus*: Dionysopolis, Akres,

Antique Capital," in *Roman Provincial Capitals under Transition. Proceedings of the International Conference Held in Plovdiv 04.–07. November 2019*, eds. Milena Raycheva and Martin Steskal, (Österreichisches Archäologisches Institut. Sonderschriften) 61 (Vienna: Holzhausen, 2021), p. 276. See also below, chapter 5: 'The historical stages of the see of Odessos from ordinary bishopric in Scythia to great metropolis of Moesia Secunda.'

- Callatis, Histria, Constantiana, Zaldapa, Tropaeum Traiani, Axiopolis, Capidava, Carsium, Troesmis, Noviodunum, Aegyssus, and Halmyris;
3. Two other sees existed at Beroe and Salsovia. They were founded either (in 536) together with the sees of the cities listed in *Synecdemus*, which is more likely, or, at latest, between 536 and 550/560;
 4. Another see was organized at (L)Ibida in 560–561 when the fortress was restored and raised to the city status after the inroad of the Kutrigurs in 559;
 5. Argamum was another bishopric center of Scythia. Its see was organized in the last decade of Justinian I's reign;
 6. It is possible that other sees were in existence at Timum, Ulmetum, and Sacidava in the second half of the 6th century;
 7. As far as the paragraph of the province of Scythia in *Notitia 3* is concerned, it most likely has an ecclesiastical but not a civil character. It seems to be compiled on the ground of the data displayed in a *Notitia episcopatum* that had been drawn up shortly after the ecclesiastical reorganization of 536.

‘*Valentinianus Episcopus Scythiae*’

One of the previous subchapters treated in brief the topic of the ecclesiastical rank of Valentinian of Tomi (c.550).¹ The opinion exposed there has been that the see of Tomi had the rank of great metropolis during his time in office. As certain scholars currently contest this thesis, it will be supplemented in this chapter with additional explanations.

Valentinian’s rank became an issue of debate when Emilian Popescu revealed the fact that Paternus (498–520) of Tomi is attested as a metropolitan.² Such a situation logically involved that Valentinian, his second successor, had the same ecclesiastical rank.³ Nevertheless, Valentinian’s title [*episcopus Scythiae* (‘bishop of Scythia’)], used by some of his contemporaries, generated doubts in this regard.

The scholars involved in this debate rallied around two divergent viewpoints. Some of them considered that only the see of Tomi existed in Roman Scythia at the time of Valentinian. According to others, Valentinian had the rank of metropolitan, his suffragan bishops being those who oversaw the other cities of the province.

4.1 The Metropolitan Rank of Valentinian of Tomi

The first scholar who raised question marks about Valentinian’s metropolitan rank was Noël Duval. He accepted the thesis of Emilian Popescu on the foundation of bishoprics in certain cities of Roman Scythia during the reign of Anastasius I (491–518). Thus, Duval indirectly also admitted the raising of the see of Tomi to the rank of metropolis. At the same time, the French scholar pointed to the fact that after Anastasius I’s reign, Valentinian appears in documents as *episcopus Scythiae* (‘bishop of Scythia’). In his opinion, such a title would suggest Valentinian’s position as the only bishop of the province, which

1 See above, subchapter 2.2.3: ‘The 6th century.’

2 See above, subchapter 2.2.3: ‘The 6th century.’

3 Between Paternus and Valentinian, Metropolitan John is also known at Tomi—see above, ‘Introduction,’ and below, subchapter 12.3.2: ‘Textual sources about the Scythian monks.’

would involve returning to the old situation of the province in the church organization plan.⁴

Georgi Atanasov resolutely rejected the possibility for Valentinian to have had the rank of metropolitan. His main argument was the fact that Valentinian is attested with the title of *'episcopus'* ('bishop') in five authentic documents.⁵ Based on this evidence, Atanasov also excluded the possibility that Paternus held the rank of metropolitan. From his point of view, raising Tomi to the rank of metropolis took place after Valentinian's time in office.⁶

On the contrary, the first who sustained Valentinian's metropolitan rank was Emilian Popescu. Searching for arguments to support this opinion, the Romanian scholar first approached a reference at the end of the epistle that Pope Vigilius (537–555) addressed to Valentinian, which mentions those who were under the authority of the hierarch of Tomi: "*sed et uniuersos ad tuam pertinentes ordinationem commoneas*" ("but that you should admonish all who are subject to your authority").⁷ Popescu considered that the pope referred to those who were, most probably, not members of the ecclesiastical staff of the circumscription of Tomi—that he did not exclude, however—but rather the suffragan bishops of the Tomitan metropolitan, from the rest of the province. He admitted, however, that the respective fragment is not sufficiently clear to identify precisely those individuals Vigilius referred to in the text.⁸

4 Noël Duval, "L'archéologie chrétienne en Roumanie à propos de deux livres récents de I. Barnea," *Revue archeologique* [N.S.] 2 (1980), p. 314.

5 There are three references of some of Valentinian's contemporaries. Two of them are preserved in two different editions of the proceedings of the Second Council of Constantinople (553). Hence the five documents in which Valentinian is mentioned as *'episcopus'*.

6 Georgi Atanasov, *Khristiānskīāt Durostorum-Drüstūr* [The Christian Durostorum-Drastar] (Veliko Tarnovo: Zograf, 2007), p. 91, n. 9; Georgi Atanasov, "Belezhki i dopūlneniā kŭm ūsrkovnata organizatsiā v Skitiā i Vtora Miziā prez IV–VI v." [Notes and Additions to the Ecclesiastical Structure of Scythia and Moesia Secunda during 4th–6th Century A.D.], *Acta Musei Varnaensis* 8 (2008), no. 1, pp. 305 and 308–309; Georgi Atanasov, "Christianity along the Lower Danube Limes in the Roman Provinces of Dacia Ripensis, Moesia Secunda and Scythia Minor (4th–6th c. AD)," in *The Lower Danube Roman Limes (1st–6th C. AD)*, eds. Lyudmil Vagalinski, Nikolay Sharankov, and Sergey Torbatov (Sofia: NIAM-BAS, 2012), pp. 359–360 and 363; Georgi Atanasov and Yoto Valeriev, "La résidence épiscopale à proximité de la cathédrale de la ville romano-byzantine de Zaldapa dans la province de Scythie," *Archaeologia Bulgarica* 24 (2020), no. 1, pp. 50–51.

7 *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum* (hereafter cited as *ACO*), IV/1, ed. Johannes Straub (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1971), p. 196^{30–31}; Richard Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553 with Related Texts on the Three Chapters Controversy*, 2, (Translated Texts for Historians) 51 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), p. 93.

8 Emilian Popescu, *Christianitas Daco-Romana. Florilegium studiorum* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1994), p. 132; Emilian Popescu, "Organizarea ecleūiastică a provinciei Scythia Minor în secolele IV–VI" [The Ecclesiastical Organization of the Province

In a later approach to this topic in another study, Popescu used the archaeological discoveries in Dobruja as arguments in favour of Valentinian’s rank as a metropolitan.⁹ In what concerns the reference at the end of the papal epistle, he nuanced his interpretation, considering that in the fragment under discussion the pope referred either only to the Christians in the bishopric of Tomi, or (most probably) to all the bishoprics of Scythia situated under the authority of Valentinian.¹⁰

Alexandru Suceveanu tried to bring new elements to bear on this subject. Trying to explain why Valentinian is named ‘*episcopus*’ (‘bishop’) and not ‘*episcopus metropolitanus*’ (‘metropolitan bishop’) or ‘*metropolita*’ (‘metropolitan’), he pointed out that the only one who used this term was Pope Vigilius, in the epistle addressed to Valentinian. Based on this observation (erroneous, in fact), Suceveanu saw this case as an anachronism.¹¹

of Scythia Minor in the 4th–6th Centuries], *Studii Teologice* 23 (1980), nos. 7–10, p. 598. This interpretation was later sustained also by Virgil Lungu [*Creștinismul în Scythia Minor în contextul vest-pontic* (The Christianity in Scythia Minor in the West-Pontic Context) (Sibiu/Constanța: T.C. Sen, 2000), p. 80; “The Christian Scythia,” in Mihail Zahariade, *Scythia Minor. A History of a Later Roman Province (284–681)* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 2006), p. 206], Nelu Zugravu [“*Itineraria ecclesiastica* nella Scythia Minor,” *Classica et Christiana* 5 (2010), no. 1, p. 240; “Studiu introductiv, notițe bibliografice, note și comentarii” (Introductory Study, Bibliographical Notes, Footnotes, and Comments), in Nelu Zugravu, ed., *Fontes Historiae Daco-Romanae Christianitatis* (Iași: Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza,” 2008), p. 126] and Ioan Iațcu [*Construcții religioase creștine în provincia Scythia: secolele IV–VI p.Chr.* (Christian Religious Constructions in the Province of Scythia: The 4th–6th Centuries AD) (Brăila: Istros, 2012), p. 31]. On the other hand, Raymund Netzhammer [*Die christlichen Altertümer der Dobrudscha* (Bucharest: SOCEC & Co., 1918), p. 63], Ioan Pulpea [Râmureanu] [“Episcopul Valentinian de Tomis. Corespondența lui cu papa Vigiliu în chestiunea «Celor Trei Capitoale»” (Bishop Valentinian of Tomi. His Correspondence with Pope Vigilius on the Three Chapter Controversy), *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 65 (1947), nos. 4–9, p. 209], Ioan G. Coman [*Scriitori bisericești din epoca străromână* (Church Writers from the Proto-Romanian Era) (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1979), p. 304], and Dominic Moreau [“To Baptise in Late Antiquity—An Unfounded Episcopal Prerogative. Some Remarks Inspired by the ‘Scythian’ Case,” *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* 98 (2022), no. 1, p. 102] consider that those the pope referred to were the believers or the clergy under the leadership of Valentinian. Robert Born [*Die Christianisierung der Städte der Provinz Scythia Minor ein Beitrag zum spätantiken Urbanismus auf dem Balkan*, (Spätantike—Frühes Christentum—Byzanz. Reihe B, Studien und Perspektiven) 36 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2012), pp. 34–35] considers Popescu’s argument as unconvincing.

9 Emilian Popescu, “L’Église de Tomis au temps du métropolitain Valentinien. L’ambassade (l’apocrisariat) de Constantinople,” *Dacia* [n.s.] 51 (2007), p. 252.

10 Popescu, “L’Église de Tomis,” p. 254, n. 10.

11 Alexandru Suceveanu, *Histria. Les résultats des fouilles. XIII. La basilique épiscopale* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2007), p. 141. The term ‘*episcopus*’ was also

On the other hand, Ion Barnea considered that there is no evidence based on which to assert that Valentinian also had the title of *'episcopus metropolitanus,'* like Paternus. Nevertheless, Barnea appreciated that Valentinian may have maintained this privilege, as compared to the other bishops of the province.¹²

Manfred Oppermann also sustained Valentinian's metropolitan rank considering the pope's words "*dilectissimo fratri Valentiniano episcopo de Tomis prouinciae Scythiae*" ("[Vigilius] to the most beloved brother Valentinian, bishop of Tomi in the province of Scythia") as a friendly way of addressing, and not the official title of the hierarch de Tomi.¹³

Robert Born, who argues for the existence of the suffragan sees in Roman Scythia since 513, considers the possibility that the title of the bishops of Tomi changed in 536 when *quaestura exercitus* was established.¹⁴ However, the German scholar does not specify why such a change would have occurred, nor what its implications would have been in terms of church organization.

As already shown, a clear argument in favour of Valentinian's metropolitan rank is the honorific epithet of the addressing formula used in his case during the debates of the Second Council of Constantinople (553). At this council, for the first time in church history, a certain honorific epithet was used for each rank within the Church. The epithets *'sanctissimus'* ('the most holy') and/or *'beatissimus'* ('the most blessed') were applied to the pope and the patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch, and Jerusalem.¹⁵ The epithet used for the metropolitan of Thessalonica (Macedonia Prima), who was also a papal vicar of Illyricum, was *'beatissimus.'* In the case of metropolitans (including titular metropolitans), the epithet *'religiosissimus'* ('the most religious') was used. This last-mentioned epithet was also used for the representatives of the

used for Valentinian by emperor Justinian I and by the quaestor of the sacred palace, Constantine (see below).

12 Ion Barnea, "Noi date despre Mitropolia Tomisului" [New Data on the Metropolitan See of Tomi], *Pontica* 24 (1991), p. 278.

13 Manfred Oppermann, *Das frühe Christentum an der Westküste des Schwarzen Meeres und im anschließenden Binnenland: historische und archäologische Zeugnisse*, (Schriften des Zentrums für Archäologie und Kulturgeschichte des Schwarzmeerraumes) 19 (Langenweißbach: Beier & Beran, 2010), p. 44.

14 Born, *Die Christianisierung*, p. 135.

15 In the documents of the Council, the name of Pope Vigilius often appears accompanied by the epithet *'religiosissimus'* ('the most religious'). Scholars have explained this situation by the fact that the Roman pontiff, refusing to participate in the Council, was seen by emperor Justinian I as a hierarch under indictment—see Evangelos Chrysos, *Die Bischofslisten des v. ökumenischen Konzils (553)* (Bonn: Habelt, 1966), p. 53; Price, *The Acts*, 2, p. 99, n. 92.

patriarch of Jerusalem (absent from the Council). For suffragan bishops and the inferior clergy (presbyters, deacons, subdeacons), the epithet of *'reuerentissimus'* ('the most devout') was used. On the other hand, when a group of hierarchs was mentioned, a group that could include both metropolitans and suffragan bishops or even only suffragan bishops, the plural of *'religiosissimus'* (i.e., *'religiosissimi'*) was used.¹⁶

In the documents of the Second Council of Constantinople, the name of Valentinian appears only once with the honorific epithet. It was used by the quaestor of the sacred palace, Constantine, in his discourse within the seventh session (26 May 553), as a representative of Emperor Justinian I.¹⁷ Mentioning the name of the hierarch of Tomi, Constantine used the epithet reserved for metropolitans: "*ad Valentinianum religiosissimum episcopum Scythiae*" ("to the most religious Bishop Valentinian of Scythia").¹⁸ The use of the epithet *'religiosissimus'* indicates that Valentinian had the rank of metropolitan. Had he been an ordinary bishop, the representative of the emperor would have had to use the epithet *'reuerentissimus'*.

In the same discourse, mentioning the names of other hierarchs or clergy representatives of inferior rank, Constantine used the epithets corresponding to the rank of each of them. In the case of Pope Vigilius, he used the epithet approved by Emperor Justinian I at that time (*'religiosissimus'*).¹⁹ For Bishop Aurelian of Arles (c.546–551), who had the rank of archbishop in Gaul (similar to that of the metropolitan in the Eastern Church) and was a papal vicar,

16 Chrysos, *Die Bischofslisten*, pp. 51–54 ff.; Richard Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553 with Related Texts on the Three Chapters Controversy*, 1, (Translated Texts for Historians) 51 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), p. 185, n. 7. In the documents of the council, there are also several exceptions from these formal rules. Some of them were noted by Richard Price [*The Acts*, 1, pp. 232 (n. 19) and 188 (n. 15); *The Acts*, 2, p. 297], who also explained the context for using an erroneous epithet in the case of Metropolitans Rufinus of Sebasteia (Armenia Prima) and Stephen of Amaseia (Helenopontus). For other exceptions, see *ACO*, IV/1, pp. 30^{18–19} and 100^{25–27}. However, these exceptions do not annul the rules regarding the honorific epithets used within the council.

17 On the quaestor of the sacred palace Constantine, see John Robert Martindale, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, 3 (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1992), pp. 342–343.

18 *ACO*, IV/1, p. 186^{7–8}; Price, *The Acts*, 2, p. 77. The same epithet also appears in the revised edition of the conciliar documents: "*ad Valentinianum religiosissimum Scythiae episcopum*" (*ACO*, IV/1, p. 184²⁶). For the second (revised) edition of the conciliar documents, see Price, *The Acts*, 1, pp. 104 ff.

19 *ACO*, IV/1, pp. 184^{5–6}, 185³², and 186^{2, 4, 10, 12, 18, 27, 36}.

he used the epithet *'religiosissimus.'*²⁰ He applied the same epithet also for Dionysius of Seleucia (Syria Prima), who had the rank of 'archbishop or syn-cellus' (ἀρχιεπίσκοπος ἦτοι σύγκελλος) in the patriarchate of Antioch.²¹

In another instance, mentioning together the Metropolitans Theodore Ascidas of Caesarea (Cappadocia Prima) and Phocas of Stobi (Macedonia Secunda), as well as the suffragan Bishop Benignus of Heraclea in Pelagonia (Macedonia Prima), who was also a representative of the Metropolitan Helias of Thessalonica, Constantine used the epithet *'religiosissimi,'* specific to a group of bishops.²² In the case of presbyters Hermisigenes and Heraclius and of the Roman subdeacon Servusdei, mentioned individually, the quaestor used the epithet *'reuerentissimus,'* corresponding to their rank within the Church.²³

For the Western bishops who were in Constantinople and who supported the position of Pope Vigilius as to the Three Chapters, Constantine used the epithet *'reuerentissimi.'*²⁴ The use of this epithet, and not of *'religiosissimi,'*

20 ACO, IV/1, p. 186⁸⁻⁹. On the history of the episcopal see of Arles during the 4th–6th centuries and its status within the Church of Gaul during the reign of Aurelian, see William E. Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles. The Making of a Christian Community in Late Antique Gaul* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 65–71, 97, 111–112, 129–132, 135–138, 244–250, 256–259, and 261–264. On the term 'archiepiscopus' as a Western equivalent of 'episcopus metropolitanus' ('metropolita'), see Hans-Georg Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich*, (Byzantinisches Handbuch im Rahmen des Handbuchs de Altertumswissenschaft) 11/1 (Munich: Beck, 1959), p. 67.

21 ACO, IV/1, p. 187⁸⁻⁹. On the see of Seleucia in *Notitia Antiochena*, see Ernst Honigmann, "Studien zur Notitia Antiochena," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 25 (1925), p. 73²⁻⁴. On the archbishops or syncelli in the patriarchate of Antioch, see Chrysos, *Die Bischofslisten*, p. 116; Evangelos Chrysos, "Zur Entstehung der Institution der Autokephalen Erzbistümer," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 62 (1969), pp. 272–273 and 281–284.

22 ACO, IV/1, p. 185¹²⁻¹³, 31.

23 Hermisigenes: ACO, IV/1, p. 187⁹; Heraclius: ACO, IV/1, p. 187¹⁰; Servusdei: ACO, IV/1, pp. 185¹⁰⁻¹¹ and 186³¹⁻³².

24 ACO, IV/1, p. 186²⁶. On that date (26 May 553), the group of Western bishops that were in Constantinople consisted of suffragan bishops and a primate of an African province (Primasius of Hadrumetum in Byzacena). Their names appear in the signature list at the end of the first *Constitutum* (14 May 553) of Pope Vigilius—see *Epistulae imperatorum pontificum aliorum inde ab a. CCLXVII usque ad a. DLIII datae Avellana quae dicitur Collectio* (hereafter cited as *Avell. Coll.*), 1, ed. Otto Günther, (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*) 35 (Prague/Vienna: F. Tempsky; Leipzig: G. Freytag, 1895), pp. 318¹⁹–320². The Archbishop Datus of Milan, who spent numerous years in Constantinople, died the previous year (552)—see Antonio Rimoldi, *Storia religiosa della Lombardia. Diocesi di Milano*, 9/1, eds. Adriano Caprioli, Antonio Rimoldi, and Luciano Vaccaro (Brescia: La Scuola, 1990), p. 34.

was explained by the fact that these hierarchs were considered bishops under indictment, as they refused to participate in the Council.²⁵

There is only one exception from these addressing rules in Constantine's discourse: the reference to Metropolitan Vincentius of Claudiopolis. In his case, Constantine was inconstant. Mentioning his name three times, he used different epithets: '*Vincentio reuerentissimo episcopo Claudiopolitano*' ('Vincentius the most devout bishop of Claudiopolis'), '*Vincentius religiosissimus*' ('the most religious Vincentius') and, again, '*Vincentius reuerentissimus*' ('the most devout Vincentius').²⁶ Of the two epithets used, the correct one would have been '*religiosissimus*,' as Vincentius was the metropolitan of the province of Honorias at that time.

This inconsistency could be explained by the fact that the representative of the emperor was speaking at that moment about an event that occurred at the time when Vincentius was only a subdeacon of the Church in Rome.²⁷ Therefore, when he used the two epithets, Constantine may have considered both the rank of subdeacon (whose specific epithet was '*reuerentissimus*') and that of metropolitan, obtained later by Vincentius (whose specific epithet was '*religiosissimus*'). However, even admitting this explanation, Constantine made a mistake when, speaking of Vincentius as a bishop of Claudiopolis, used the epithet specific to his previous rank.

The use of the epithet '*reuerentissimus*' in the case of Vincentius could be explained in yet another way. It is known that Vincentius refused to participate in the ecumenical council at that time. It is not excluded that, for this reason, he may have been considered a hierarch under indictment by the emperor. In this case, Constantine would have intentionally used an inferior honorific epithet ('*reuerentissimus*') when he mentioned the name of the metropolitan of Honorias, whereas the use of '*religiosissimus*' was an error, probably due to lack of attention.

The quaestor of the sacred palace had already delivered a speech within the council, in the second session (8 May 553). On that occasion, he mainly spoke about the meeting he had with Pope Vigilius, together with other civil officials and hierarchs (7 May 553). They had all tried to determine the Roman pontiff to take part in the debates of the ecumenical council. In that discourse, as well, Constantine used the epithets corresponding to the ecclesiastical

25 This explanation is also sustained by the fact that Primasius of Hadrumetum seems not to have been recognized as a primate of the province of Byzacena—see Price, *The Acts*, 2, p. 293, n. 14, and below, subchapter 4.3: "The meaning of the collocation "*episcopus Scythiae*.""

26 *ACO*, IV/1, p. 186²⁷⁻²⁸, *ACO*, IV/1, p. 186³¹, and *ACO*, IV/1, p. 186³²⁻³³, respectively.

27 See *ACO*, IV/1, p. 186³²⁻³⁴.

ranks of those he mentioned. In the case of Vigilius, the quaestor even used the epithet reserved for Roman pontiffs (*'beatissimus'*).²⁸ Afterward, making a general reference to the eastern patriarchs, Constantine successively used both epithets reserved for them (*'beatissimi'* and *'sanctissimi'*).²⁹ Mentioning together the bishops (12—metropolitans and suffragan bishops) who had accompanied him at the meeting with the pope, Constantine used the epithet *'religiosissimi'*.³⁰ He used the same epithet also when he referred generally to the hierarchs participating in the council.³¹

It can be concluded, therefore, that in his official discourses, the quaestor of the sacred palace tried to respect fully the official contemporary formal codes. There is only one mistake in his discourses, namely, the reference to Metropolitan Vincentius of Claudiopolis. In his case, the imperial official was inconstant, using two different honorific epithets.

However, the epithet *'religiosissimus'* does not permit clear conclusions concerning the type of metropolitan rank Valentinian of Tomi held. More precisely, it cannot help establish if he was a metropolitan with suffragan bishops or only a titular metropolitan (autocephalous archbishop).

The loss of the rank of great metropolis by the see of Tomi could have been the consequence of the dissolution of all its suffragan bishoprics or of the transfer of this rank to another bishopric of the province.³² The archaeological discoveries that attest the existence of more episcopal centres in Roman Scythia around the middle of the 6th century refute the first possibility. The second possibility is contradicted by the information of the written sources. In *Notitia episcopatum* 3, the see of Tomi is registered as a metropolis of Scythia and all the other bishoprics of the province appear as suffragan.³³ Furthermore, on 9 May 544, by *Novella* 120, Emperor Justinian I granted the Churches of Tomi and Odessos the right to sell their properties in order to obtain the necessary funds to redeem the captives.³⁴ This provision confirms the rank of great

28 *ACO*, IV/1, p. 27²¹⁻²³.

29 *'Beatissimi'*: *ACO*, IV/1, p. 28¹. *'Sanctissimi'*: *ACO*, IV/1, p. 28⁶.

30 *ACO*, IV/1, p. 27²³⁻²⁷.

31 *ACO*, IV/1, p. 28⁶.

32 Such a situation was registered in Moesia Secunda, where the see of Odessos undertook the rank of great metropolis from that of Marcianopolis in 536—see below, chapter 5: 'The historical stages of the see of Odessos from ordinary bishopric in Scythia to great metropolis of Moesia Secunda.'

33 Jean Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae: Texte critique, introduction et notes*, (Géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire Byzantin) 1 (Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 1981), 3.40.642–656, p. 242.

34 *Novellae* 120, in *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, 3, ed. Rudolf Schöll (Berlin: Weidmannos, 1912), pp. 120⁹ and 588^{4-8/4-7}; *The Novels of Justinian*, trans. Samuel P. Scott (Cincinnati, 1932).

metropolis of the two episcopal sees, the metropolitan being the one who represented the interests of each province in front of the emperor, and not one of the suffragan bishops. If in Scythia the rank of great metropolis was held by another episcopal see at that time, then most probably that one would have been mentioned both in *Notitia episcopatum* 3 and in *Novella* 120, not that of Tomi. Therefore, the status of great metropolis of the episcopal see of Tomi at the time of Valentinian is certain.

Two other aspects require explanation: 1. Why does Valentinian appear in documents with the title of '*episcopus*' and not that of '*episcopus metropolitanus*' ('metropolitan bishop') (like Paternus) or '*metropolita*' ('metropolitan')? 2. Why is Valentinian mentioned at the Second Council of Constantinople as '*episcopus Scythiae*' ('bishop of Scythia') and not as '*episcopus de Tomis*' ('bishop of Tomi') or '*episcopus ciuitatis Tomorum*' ('bishop of the city of Tomi')? These questions must be approached by taking into account, as Noël Duval already noted, that the title '*episcopus Scythiae*' suggests the existence of only one hierarch in the whole province of Scythia.

4.2 The Meaning of the Term '*Episcopus*' Attributed to the Metropolitan Valentinian

Three officials used the term '*episcopus*' when they referred to Valentinian of Tomi: Pope Vigilius, Emperor Justinian I, and Constantine, the quaestor of the sacred palace. Vigilius used it before the Second Council of Constantinople, in his response letter to the hierarch de Tomi (18 March 550). Emperor Justinian I used it in the letter he addressed to the participants in the council at the opening of its sessions (5 May 553). The quaestor Constantine used it in the speech he delivered in front of the participants in the council within the seventh session (26 May 553), as a representative of the emperor.

4.2.1 Pope Vigilius's Letter of 18 March 550 to Valentinian

In the greeting formula at the opening of the letter addressed to the hierarch of Tomi, Pope Vigilius used the words: "*Dilectissimo fratri Valentiniano episcopo de Tomis prouinciae Scythiae Vigilius*" ("Vigilius to the most beloved brother Valentinian, bishop of Tomi in the province of Scythia").³⁵

Available at https://droitromain.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/Anglica/Novellae_Scott.htm.
Accessed 2022 May 24.

35 ACO, IV/1, p. 195²; Price, *The Acts*, 2, p. 91.

The pope's use of the term '*episcopus*,' and not of words like '*episcopus metropolitano*' or '*metropolita*,' has a quite simple explanation. Evangelos Chrysos, analyzing the addressing formulas used by the Roman pontiffs in the 6th century, noticed that: "Der Papst nennt seine kirchlichen Adressaten, unbeachtet ihres bischöflichen Ranges, gewöhnlich *frater carissimus*, *frater dilectissimus* oder *frater amantissimus*" ("The pope usually calls his ecclesiastical addressees *frater carissimus*, *frater dilectissimus* or *frater amantissimus*, regardless of their episcopal rank").³⁶ Therefore, the popes of the 6th century did not mention in their letters the ecclesiastical rank of their addressees, preferring the use of certain fraternal phrases instead.

To support this observation, the Greek scholar proposed as examples several addressing formulas from the correspondence of Popes Gelasius I (492–496), Hormisdas (514–523), Symmachus (498–514), Agapetus I (535–536), and Vigilius. In the latter's case, who is of special interest for the current analysis, Chrysos referred to epistle 93 (17 September 540), addressed by Vigilius to Patriarch Menas of Constantinople (536–552).³⁷ In the opening of this letter, in the greeting formula, the pope addressed the patriarch using the words "*dilectissimo fratri Menae Uigilius*" ("Vigilius to the most beloved brother Menas").³⁸

There is another letter of Pope Vigilius (*Ep.* 92) preserved from the same date (17 September 540) and addressed to Emperor Justinian I. In its content, referring to Patriarch Menas, Vigilius did not mention his rank within the Church, but named him: "*Menam fratrem et coepiscopum nostrum*" ("Menas, our brother and fellow bishop").³⁹ The same collocation was used by the Roman pontiff when he referred to the rest of the bishops of those times: "*omnibus fratribus et coepiscopis nostris*" ("to all our brethren and fellow bishops").⁴⁰

Numerous other letters were preserved from Pope Vigilius. For a complete understanding of the current topic, some of those written during his involvement in the Three Chapters controversy are analyzed below.⁴¹ Their value for the present study resides in the fact that they reflect the pope's wording in a tense period and on an extremely important issue, of a dogmatic nature. This involves the use by the pope of a definitive and official phrasing.

In the year 550, shortly after the epistle sent to Valentinian of Tomi, Vigilius deposed two of his deacons, Rusticus and Sebastian. In the letter addressed to

36 Chrysos, *Die Bischofslisten*, p. 68.

37 Chrysos, *Die Bischofslisten*, p. 68, n. 85.

38 *Avell. Coll.*, 1, p. 354⁶.

39 *Avell. Coll.*, 1, p. 351¹¹; similarly, p. 351^{22–23}.

40 *Avell. Coll.*, 1, p. 349^{12–13}.

41 On the evolution of Pope Vigilius' attitude toward the Three Chapters, see Price, *The Acts*, 1, pp. 42–58.

them, mentioning the name of Patriarch Menas of Constantinople, the pope did not use his official title, but preferred either the collocation '*frater noster Menas*' ('our brother Menas'),⁴² or the term '*antistes*' ('bishop'),⁴³ or their association: "*Menas frater noster huius ciuitatis antistes*" ("our brother Menas, the bishop of this city").⁴⁴ He used the same wording in the letter when he referred to Bishops Julian of Cingulum, John of the Marsi, and Zacchaeus of Scyllacum, his suffragan bishops in Italy.⁴⁵

Vigilius used the same fraternal phrasing in the epistle sent to Aurelian of Arles on 29 April 550. The greeting formula includes the words "*Dilectissimo fratri et coepiscopo Aureliano Arelatensi Vigilius*" ("Vigilius to the most beloved brother and fellow Bishop Aurelian of Arles").⁴⁶ The letter also features the following collocations: '*fraternitas tua/uestra*' ('your fraternity'), '*caritas tua/uestra*' ('your charity'), '*frater carissime*' ('most dear brother').⁴⁷ As can be observed, even if Aurelian had the rank of archbishop, under his authority being the bishops in Provence, the pope did not use the official '*archiepiscopus*,' but the simple term '*coepiscopus*' ('fellow bishop').

On 14 August 551, Vigilius wrote another document of utmost importance by its implications. This is the excommunication letter of Metropolitan Theodore Ascidas of Caesarea and of Patriarch Menas of Constantinople. In its contents, mentioning the names of the two hierarchs, he either used the word '*episcopus*,' or mentioned their names without any title.⁴⁸ The same terminology is

42 ACO, IV/1, p. 189²⁰, 35–36.

43 ACO, IV/1, p. 191^{24–25}: "*Menas huius ciuitatis antistes*" ("Menas the bishop of this city").

44 ACO, IV/1, p. 191⁴⁰.

45 ACO, IV/1, p. 189^{29–30}: "*coepiscopo nostro ... Iuliano*" ("our fellow bishop ... Julian"). ACO, IV/1, p. 192^{9–10}: "*fratribus nostris Iohanni et Iuliano episcopis*" ("our brethren John and Julian the bishops"). ACO, IV/1, p. 193^{16–17}: "*per fratres nostros episcopos, id est Iohannem Marsicanum et Iulianum Cingulanum*" ("through our brethren bishops, namely John of the Marsi and Julian of Cingulum"). ACO, IV/1, p. 194^{32–33}: "*per Iohannem Marsicanum, Zacchaeum Squillacenum, Iulianum Cingulanum fratres et coepiscopos nostros*" ("through our brethren and fellow Bishops John of the Marsi, Zacchaeus of Scyllacum, Julian of Cingulum").

46 ACO, IV/1, p. 197². A similar addressing formula also appears in the letter of 23 August 546, through which the pope granted Aurelian the title of papal vicar in Gaul: "*Dilectissimo fratri Aureliano Vigilius*" ("Vigilius to the most beloved brother Aurelian") (Vigilius, *Epistolae et Decreta*, PL 69:37).

47 ACO, IV/1, pp. 197^{2–3}, 5, 8, 25–26 and 198^{12–13}, 23, 27. The same phrasing also appears at the end of the letter addressed to Aurelian of Arles on 23 August 546: "*Deus te incolumem custodiat, frater charissime*" ("May God preserve you unharmed, most dear brother") (Vigilius, *Epistolae et Decreta*, PL 69:39).

48 Eduard Schwartz, *I. Vigiliusbriefe. II. Zur Kirchenpolitik Iustinians* (Munich: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1940), p. 10^{28–29}: "*tu, Theodore Caesareae Cappadociae ciuitatis episcopo*" ("You, Theodore, bishop of the city of Caesarea in

used also in the case of the hierarchs who shared his viewpoint on the Three Chapters. Referring to Archbishop Datius of Milan, Vigilius used the term ‘*antistes*’ (bishop) or the fraternal collocation ‘*frater noster episcopus*’ (‘our brother bishop’).⁴⁹ It is important to note that the archbishop of Mediolanum extended his jurisdiction over six western provinces (Gaul, Burgundy, Spain, Liguria, Aemilia, and Venetia) at that date.⁵⁰ In another place, mentioning the name of Datius near those of other western suffragan bishops, the pope named them all ‘*fratres et coepiscopi nostri*’ (‘our brethren and fellow bishops’).⁵¹

Vigilius used the same terms also in his letters of 5 February 552, 6 January 553, 8 December 553, and in the first *Constitutum* of 14 May 553.⁵² All these sources show that Pope Vigilius avoided using words suggestive of ecclesiastical rank in his correspondences. Thus, he observed the tradition inherited from his predecessors in the Roman see, as shown by Evangelos Chrysos.

Reapproaching the letter addressed by Vigilius to Valentinian of Tomi, the same fraternal address style can be noticed in its contents, as well. Both at the opening of the letter and in the wishes at its end, there are collocations

Cappadocia”); p. 14¹³⁻¹⁴: “*te, Theodore, Caesareae Cappadociae ciuitatis quondam episcopum*” (“you, Theodore, formerly bishop of the city of Caesarea in Cappadocia”); pp. 14²⁵⁻¹⁵: “*Theodorum Caesareae Cappadociae ciuitatis quondam episcopum*” (“Theodore, formerly bishop of the city of Caesarea in Cappadocia”); p. 14²⁰⁻²¹: “*Menam Constantinopolitanae ciuitatis episcopum*” (“Menas bishop of the city of Constantinople”); p. 12³⁻⁵: “*cum ... Mena Constantinopolitanae ciuitatis*” (“with ... Menas of the city of Constantinople”).

49 Schwartz, *I. Vigiliusbrieft*, p. 12³⁻⁵: “*cum ... Datio Mediolanensis urbis antistite*” (“with ... Datius bishop of the city of Milan”); p. 13¹²⁻¹³: “*frater noster Datius Mediolanensis episcopus*” (“our brother Datius bishop of Milan”).

50 See Schwartz, *I. Vigiliusbrieft*, p. 21²⁴⁻²⁹.

51 Schwartz, *I. Vigiliusbrieft*, p. 14⁸⁻¹³.

52 5 February 552: “*fratrem nostrum Datium episcopum Mediolanensis ecclesiae*” (“our brother Datius bishop of the Church of Milan”) (Schwartz, *I. Vigiliusbrieft*, p. 10⁷⁻⁸). 6 January 553: “*Dilectissimo fratri Eutychio et episcopis sub te constitutis Vigilius*” (“Vigilius to the most beloved brother Eutychius and the bishops under you”) (*ACO*, IV/1, p. 16¹⁷); “Τῷ ἀγαπητῷ ἀδελφῷ Εὐτυχίῳ καὶ τοῖς ὑπὸ σὲ ἐπισκόποις Βρυλλίῳ” (“Vigilius to his beloved brother Eutychius and the bishops under you”) (*ACO*, IV/1, p. 236³⁰), Eutychius being the patriarch of Constantinople. 8 December 553: “Τῷ ἀγαπητῷ ἀδελφῷ Εὐτυχίῳ Βρυλλίῳ” (“Vigilius to his beloved brother Eutychius”) (*ACO*, IV/1, p. 245⁹; similarly, *ACO*, IV/1, pp. 245¹⁵, 23-24, 246¹, and 247³⁶). First *Constitutum*: “*fratres et coepiscopi nostri Eutychius Constantinopolitanus, Apollinaris Alexandrinus, Domininus Antiochiae Syriae, Helias Thessalonicensis, sed et ceteri*” (“our brethren and fellow Bishops Eutychius of Constantinople, Apollinaris of Alexandria, Domininus of Antioch in Syria, Helias of Thessalonica, and others also”) (*Avell. Coll.*, I, p. 234¹⁵⁻¹⁷); “*frater noster Benignus Heracleae Pelagoniae episcopus*” (“our brother Benignus bishop of Heraclea in Pelagonia”) (*Avell. Coll.*, I, p. 235¹⁴⁻¹⁵; similarly, pp. 236²¹⁻²² and 286²²⁻²³).

commonly used by the pope: "*dilectissimo fratri Valentiniano*" ("to the most beloved brother Valentinian") and "*deus te incolumem custodiat, frater karissime*" ("May God keep you safe, most dear brother"), respectively.⁵³ They can be also found within the content of the document (*'fraternitas tua/uestra, 'caritas tua'*).⁵⁴

Vigilius mentioned twice the name of Patriarch Menas of Constantinople in the letter, who still occupied the patriarchal throne at that time (18 March 550). In his case, Vigilius also used the term '*episcopus*,' as with Valentinian: "*ad fratrem nostrum Menam Constantinopolitanae urbis episcopum*" ("to our brother Menas, bishop of the city of Constantinople") and "*ad fratrem et coepiscopum nostrum Menam*" ("to our brother and fellow Bishop Menas").⁵⁵ Menas was obviously not an ordinary bishop, as the hierarch of Tomi did not have this rank. The pope's wording certainly shows only the fact that both (Menas and Valentinian) belonged to the episcopal class.

The conclusion of this analysis is that the term '*episcopus*,' used by Pope Vigilius toward Valentinian of Tomi, does not reflect the latter's rank within the Church. It only proves the fact that Valentinian belonged to the higher ecclesiastical hierarchy. In fact, taken separately, the titles used by Pope Vigilius in his epistles do not allow clear conclusions regarding the ecclesiastical rank of the hierarchs he mentioned.

4.2.2 *The Letter of Emperor Justinian I (5 May 553) and the Speech of the Quaestor Constantine*

Unlike Pope Vigilius, Emperor Justinian I and quaestor Constantine mentioned the name of Valentinian of Tomi during the Second Council of Constantinople. At that time, they were both addressing the hierarchs participating in the Council. Justinian I mentioned the name of Valentinian in the letter read within the first session, whereas the quaestor of the sacred palace did that in the speech delivered within the seventh session. To understand the topic under discussion, the other excerpts from the conciliar documents, containing the words of the emperor and of the quaestor of the sacred palace, are also worth mentioning. These are, on the one hand, the imperial decree on the elimination from the diptychs of Pope Vigilius's name, read within the seventh session of the council, and the speech delivered by quaestor Constantine within the second session. These sources allow us to understand better the terminology Justinian I and Constantine used at that time.

53 ACO, IV/1, pp. 195² and 196³²⁻³³.

54 ACO, IV/1, pp. 195^{3, 6, 17, 37} and 196^{7, 23, 28}.

55 ACO, IV/1, pp. 195²⁸⁻²⁹ and 196¹⁵.

Justinian I and Constantine never employed the phrase *'episcopus metropolitanus'* or its equivalent, *'metropolita'*, in all these fragments. They indicated the ecclesiastical rank only in the case of the pope and of the patriarchs (*'papa'* and *'patriarcha'*, respectively). In what concerns the metropolitans, two different situations can be gleaned in their speeches. When they mentioned the metropolitans together with the suffragan bishops, they did not point to any rank difference between them, naming them all *'episcopi'* ('bishops') and using the specific honorific epithet (*'religiosissimi'*). Analyzed separately, such references do not permit the identification of the mentioned hierarchs' ecclesiastical ranks (metropolitan or ordinary bishop). The second case is that in which metropolitans were mentioned individually. The clearest example of this type is that of Archbishop Aurelian of Arles. In these cases, metropolitans were named *'episcopus'* ('bishop') as well, but they received the epithet specific to their rank within the Church (*'religiosissimus'*). On the other hand, suffragan bishops mentioned individually were given the epithet *'reuerentissimus'*.

These observations lead to the conclusion that in the language of Justinian I and Constantine, the only distinctive element between metropolitans and suffragan bishops was the honorific epithet. Its value for the precise identification of a bishop's rank, however, is conditioned by the individual reference to the respective hierarch.

The observance of these rules can also be noticed in the case of all the other documents of the council in 553. They are evident both in the case of those who wrote the reports and in the hierarchs who delivered the speeches within the sessions. They all used the terms *'papa'* and *'patriarcha'*, but avoided the use of *'episcopus metropolitanus'* and *'metropolita'*. In the preserved documents of the council, there are only two exceptions to this observation.⁵⁶ The first one is a mention made by the person who wrote the report of the fifth session. Writing the name of Metropolitan Euphrantas of Tyana (Capadocia Secunda), he used the collocation *'episcopus metropolitanus'*.⁵⁷ In the second case, there is a speech delivered within the sixth session by Theodore Ascidas of Caesarea. Presenting the situation of Bishop Ibas of Edessa at the Council of Chalcedon, he also named some metropolitans from 451. In that context, Theodore Ascidas

56 In this respect, older documents, such as those of the previous councils read within the sessions of the council in 553, must not be taken into account, as they reflect the addressing code specific to those times.

57 *ACO*, IV/1, p. 100²⁵: *"His ita dictis ab Euphranta reuerentissimo episcopo metropolitano Tyanensi"* ("When Euphrantas the most devout metropolitan bishop of Tyana had said this").

revealed twice their status of *'metropolitani'* ('metropolitans').⁵⁸ In the rest of the council documents, the distinction between metropolitans (including titular metropolitans) and ordinary bishops was made through the epithets *'religiosissimus'* and *'reuerentissimus'*, respectively.

These observations prove that both Justinian I and quaestor Constantine perfectly respected the addressing norms used within the council.

A special case is represented by the council's list of signatories. The epithets specific to the ecclesiastical ranks were no longer used in it. Still, the distinction between metropolitans and suffragan bishops was expressed in a different form. The metropolitans (either with suffragan bishops or titular metropolitans) signed the conciliar documents immediately after the patriarchs, in the first part of the list, while the suffragan bishops signed after them, in the final part. Moreover, most of the metropolitans also mentioned in their signatures the status of metropolis of their residence city.⁵⁹ As such, they emphasized their rank within the Church.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, the council's list of signatories is less important for the topic under discussion, as the signature of Valentinian of Tomi does not appear in its contents.

In what concerns the letter of Emperor Justinian I to the council, the reference to the metropolitan of Tomi appears as follows: "*ad Valentinianum episcopum Scythiae*" ("to Valentinian bishop of Scythia").⁶¹ As can be noticed, the emperor used no honorific epithet, but this is not the only situation of this

58 *ACO*, IV/1, p. 145²⁴⁻²⁷: "*Iohannes uero Sebastiae episcopus et Seleucus Amasiae et Constantinus Meletinae et Patricius Tyanensium et Petrus Gangrorum et Atarbius Trapezuntensium uicem agens Dorothei Neocaesareae, omnes metropolitani*" ("Indeed, Bishop John of Sebasteia, Seleucus of Amaseia, Constantine of Melitene, Patricius of Tyana, Peter of Gangra, and Atarbius of Trapezus, representing Dorotheus of Neocaesarea, all of them metropolitans"); similarly, p. 145³⁴.

59 Several metropolitans did not specify the rank of metropolis of their residence city, namely: Theodore Ascidas of Caesarea in Capadocia Prima (*ACO*, IV/1, p. 222¹⁴), Andrew of Ephesus in Asia (*ACO*, IV/1, p. 222²³), Megethius of Heraclea in Europa (*ACO*, IV/1, p. 223⁸⁻⁹), John of Caesarea in Palaestina Prima (*ACO*, IV/1, p. 225⁵), Severianus of Aphrodisias in Caria (*ACO*, IV/1, p. 225³⁴⁻³⁵), and titular Metropolitans Severus of Pompeiopolis in Paphlagonia (*ACO*, IV/1, p. 226²⁸⁻²⁹) and George of Cypsela Justiniana Nova in Rhodope (*ACO*, IV/1, p. 226³⁰⁻³¹).

60 *ACO*, IV/1, p. 224⁵: "*Iohannes humilis episcopus Nicomediensium metropoleos*" ("John the humble bishop of the metropolis of Nicomedia"); similarly: *ACO*, IV/1, pp. 223¹⁸, 28, 37, 224¹⁴, 225⁴, 10, 13-18, 20-22, 24-25, 28-29, 33, 36, 226¹, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16-17, 19, 23, 27, 230²⁰, 33, and 231², 5, 12. Also, *ACO*, IV/1, p. 224²³⁻²⁴: "*Constantinus misericordia dei episcopus sanctae dei ecclesiae Chalcedonensium metropolitanae ciuitatis*" ("Constantine by the mercy of God bishop of the holy Church of God of the metropolitan city of Chalcedon"); similarly: *ACO*, IV/1, pp. 224³³, 225⁸, 11, 26, 31, and 226³.

61 *ACO*, IV/1, p. 12¹². In the 2nd (revised) edition of the conciliar acts, the form "*Valentiniano episcopo Scythiae*" appears (*ACO*, IV/1, p. 11²⁵).

type in the content of the letter. A similar case is that of Archbishop Aurelian of Arles, mentioned immediately after the hierarch of Tomi: ‘*Aurelianum episcopum Arelati*’ (‘Aurelian bishop of Arles’).⁶² The omission of the honorific epithet in their case could be explained by the fact that they were no longer alive at that time. It is known that Aurelian died on 16 June 551,⁶³ but the date of Valentinian’s death is not known.

Regarding the rest of the mentions in the letter, they are as follows: in the greeting phrase, writing the names of his addressees (the hierarchs gathered at the council), Justinian I first named the patriarchs of Constantinople, Alexandria, and Antioch, whom he called bishops and patriarchs: “*beatissimis episcopis et patriarchis Eutychio Constantinopolitano, Apolinario Alexandrino, Dominino Theopolitano*” (“to the most blessed Bishops and Patriarchs Eutychius of Constantinople, Apollinarius of Alexandria, Dominus of Theopolis”).⁶⁴ Immediately after them, the representatives of the patriarch of Jerusalem are mentioned. In the case of the latter, Justinian I used the titles archbishop and patriarch: “*uicem agentibus Eustochii beatissimi archiepiscopi Hierosolymitani et patriarchae*” (“representatives of Eustochius the most blessed archbishop of Jerusalem and patriarch”).⁶⁵ Metropolitan and their suffragan bishops were all named bishops: “*et reliquis religiosissimis episcopis ex diuersis prouinciis*” (“and the other most religious bishops from various provinces”).⁶⁶ The contents of the letter also include the title ‘*papa*,’ used for Vigilius, as well as

62 *ACO*, IV/1, p. 12¹². In the 2nd edition of the conciliar documents, appears ‘*Aureliano Arelati*’ (*ACO*, IV/1, p. 11²⁵).

63 Martin Heinzelmann, *Bischofsherrschaft in Gallien. Zur Kontinuität römischer Führungsschichten vom 4. bis zum 7. Jahrhundert. Soziale, prosopographische und bildungsgeschichtliche Aspekte* (Zürich/Munich: Artemis Verlag, 1976), p. 139. It is possible, however, that Aurelian’s death may have been unknown in Constantinople at that time (553). An indication in this respect is the fact that Aurelian’s successor to the see of Arles, Sapaudus (552–586), received the title of papal vicar only in April 556, from Pope Pelagius I (556–561) (Klingshirn, *Caesarius of Arles*, p. 264). Moreover, a reference from the revised edition of the acts from the Second Council of Constantinople is to be noted in this regard. It was written by the imperial chancellery shortly after the end of the council, in the period between the second *Constitutum* of Pope Vigilius (22 February 554) and the moment of his death (7 June 555) (see Price, *The Acts*, 1, pp. 104 ff). In the content of this edition appears the mention that Aurelian ‘presides’ (*praesidet*) and not ‘presided’ (*praesedit/praesidebat*) the Church of Arles: “*ad Aurelianum religiosissimum qui praesidet Arelati uenerandae ecclesiae*” (“to the most religious Aurelian, who presides over the venerable Church of Arles”) (*ACO*, IV/1, p. 184²⁷).

64 *ACO*, IV/1, p. 8^{15–17}.

65 *ACO*, IV/1, p. 8^{17–18}.

66 *ACO*, IV/1, p. 8^{18–19}.

'*patriarcha*,' when general references were made to eastern patriarchs.⁶⁷ In the case of Archbishop Aurelian of Arles, the emperor pointed to the fact that the Church of Arles is the first of the Churches of Gaul, but he did not use the term '*archiepiscopus*,' nor its eastern equivalents ('*episcopus metropolitanus*' or '*metropolita*'), but the title '*episcopus*:' "*ad ... Aurelianum episcopum Arelati quae est prima Galliae ecclesiarum*" ("to ... Aurelian bishop of Arles, the first of the Churches of Gaul").⁶⁸

The distinction patriarchs—other bishops exists also in the imperial decree for the elimination of Pope Vigilius's name from the diptychs, as well as in other phrases of the emperor, quoted by quaestor Constantine within the council.⁶⁹

The same wording is specific to Constantine. In his discourse within the seventh session, he mentioned altogether the names of two metropolitans (Theodore Ascidas of Caesarea and Phocas of Stobi) and a suffragan bishop (Benignus of Heraclea), without specifying the metropolitan rank of Theodore and Phocas: "[*Vigilius*] *ad se uocavit ... Theodorum et Benignum et Focam religiosissimos episcopos*" ("[*Vigilius*] called to his presence ... most religious Bishops Theodore, Benignus, and Phocas").⁷⁰ Constantine also used the title '*episcopus*' when he individually mentioned the name of the Metropolitan Vincentius of Claudiopolis and of Archbishop or Syncellus Dionysius of Seleucia: "*Vincentio reuerentissimo episcopo Claudiopolitano*" ("Vincentius the most devout bishop of Claudiopolis") and "*Dionysius religiosissimus episcopus Seleucia sanctae ecclesiae*" ("Dionysius the most religious bishop of the holy Church of Seleucia").⁷¹ He used the epithet '*archiepiscopus*' only in the case of the former Patriarch Menas.⁷² In the case of Aurelian of Arles, the quaestor used the term '*praesul*' ('president'): "*ad Aurelianum religiosissimum praesulem Arelatensis ecclesiae quae prima est sanctarum ecclesiarum quae in Gallia sunt*" ("to Aurelian the most religious president of the Church of Arles, which is the

67 '*Papa*:' ACO, IV/1, pp. 11¹¹ and 12¹⁸. '*Patriarcha*:' ACO, IV/1, p. 12²²⁻²³, 27, 33.

68 ACO, IV/1, p. 12¹²⁻¹³. In the 2nd edition of the conciliar documents, the term '*episcopus*' does not appear anymore: "*Aureliano Arelati, quae est prima sanctissimarum Galliae ecclesiarum*" ("to Aurelian of Arles, the first of the Churches of Gaul") (ACO, IV/1, p. 11²⁵⁻²⁶).

69 The decree: "*beatissimis archiepiscopis et patriarchis ... et ceteris religiosissimis episcopis ex diuersis prouinciis*" ("to the most blessed archbishops and patriarchs ... and the other most religious bishops from various provinces") (ACO, IV/1, p. 201¹²⁻¹⁶). Other sentences: ACO, IV/1, pp. 281²⁻¹³ and 185³³: "*cum beatissimis patriarchis et religiosissimis episcopis*" ("with the most blessed patriarchs and most religious bishops").

70 ACO, IV/1, p. 185¹¹⁻¹³.

71 ACO, IV/1, pp. 186²⁷⁻²⁸ and 187⁸⁻⁹, respectively.

72 ACO, IV/1, p. 186¹³.

first of the holy Churches in Gaul”).⁷³ It is the only place where Constantine used this term.

In other contemporary documents, *‘praesul’* (and *‘πρόεδρος,’* its Greek equivalent) is used for popes, eastern patriarchs, and metropolitans.⁷⁴ Its wide use shows that it did not express the ecclesiastical rank of a hierarch, but it seems to have been used either as a prestige synonym for *‘episcopus,’* or as a term indicating the important position that some of the hierarchs held within the church organization of their region. Moreover, the last-mentioned meaning is confirmed by the fact that the quaestor of the sacred palace emphasized the important position that the Church of Arles had in Gaul. On the other hand, Constantine’s use of the epithet *‘religiosissimus,’* in the same phrase, both for Aurelian of Arles and for Valentinian of Tomi, proves that, in his opinion, the two hierarchs had similar ranks within the Church.

In the speech delivered within the second session of the council (8 May 553), the quaestor used the same terminology. Mentioning together the names of more metropolitans, of titular metropolitans, of Thessalonica metropolitan representative and of certain suffragan bishops, he used the term *‘episcopi’* (‘bishops’).⁷⁵ He used the same term also in his general references to the rest of the participants in the council (metropolitans and suffragan bishops).⁷⁶ Constantine used the terms *‘papa’* and *‘patriarcha,’*⁷⁷ respectively, only in the case of the pope and the patriarchs.

Consequently, the conclusion to be drawn is that the term *‘episcopus,’* used by Emperor Justinian I and quaestor Constantine for Valentinian of Tomi, does not show his rank as a simple bishop. As in the case of Pope Vigilius’ terminology, this title certainly indicates that Valentinian had the status of hierarch, without excluding the possibility for him to have been a metropolitan.

4.3 The Meaning of the Collocation *‘Episcopus Scythiae’*

The collocation *‘episcopus Scythiae’* (‘bishop of Scythia’) is used by Emperor Justinian I and by quaestor Constantine. Moreover, they named only the province, without the hierarch’s see, only in the case of Valentinian. This wording

73 ACO, IV/1, p. 186⁸⁻¹⁰.

74 Popes: ACO, IV/1, pp. 195³⁶, 236⁹⁻¹¹, and 161⁻²; patriarchs: *Avell. Coll.*, 1, pp. 379¹⁵ and 391¹⁰; metropolitans: *Avell. Coll.*, 2, ed. Otto Günther, (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*) 35 (Prague/Vienna: F. Tempsky; Leipzig: G. Freytag, 1898), p. 527²⁴⁻²⁵.

75 ACO, IV/1, p. 27²³⁻²⁷.

76 ACO, IV/1, p. 281^{-4, 6-7}.

77 *‘Papa’*: ACO, IV/1, p. 27²¹⁻²²; *‘patriarcha’*: ACO, IV/1, p. 281^{. 6, 12}.

is in contrast with the one used by Justinian I and Constantine in the case of Aurelian of Arles. Even if they both emphasized the important position of the see of Arles within the church organization in Gaul, they did not use the collocation '*episcopus Galliae*,' but mentioned the name of the city of Arles: '*episcopus Arelati*' and '*praesul Arelatensis ecclesiae*,' respectively.⁷⁸

Within the rest of the documents of the Second Council of Constantinople, the only hierarch mentioned by reference to the province ('*episcopus prouinciae*'), and not to the city of residence ('*episcopus ciuitatis*'), is Pompeianus of Victoriana: "*Pompeiano religiosissimo episcopo Byzacii*" ("Pompeianus the most religious bishop of [the province of] Byzacena"). However, it is noteworthy that he is always included in the group of the metropolitans and with the epithet specific to them ('*religiosissimus*') both in the lists of signatories and that of attendance, even if he was a suffragan bishop.⁷⁹ Based on these aspects, several scholars concluded that Pompeianus claimed to have been a representative of the provincial synod of Byzacena.⁸⁰ It would not be excluded, however, that the members of the council may have considered him a representative of this province, as the primate of Byzacena (Primasius of Hadrumetum), being in Constantinople, refused to participate in the council. Whatever the real reason behind this situation, it has nothing in common with that of Scythia.

In what concerns the case of the metropolitan of Tomi, it should be emphasized that in the letter addressed to Valentinian, Pope Vigilius did not use the collocation '*episcopus Scythiae*,' but '*episcopus de Tomis prouinciae Scythiae*.'⁸¹ It is difficult to say if Vigilius knew the title used by the authorities in Constantinople for the hierarch of Tomi and, in the case of an affirmative answer, why he did not use it, as well. However, the pope most probably took the title used directly from Valentinian. More precisely, in the (lost) letter that the hierarch of Tomi had previously addressed to the pope, Valentinian may have presented himself as '*episcopus de Tomis prouinciae Scythiae*,' either in the greeting formula, or in the final signature, or in both places. In this case, the Roman pontiff only reproduced it in his response letter to Valentinian. Of importance is also the observation that Justinian I and Constantine had available this letter of the pope, and, consequently, knew the title he used for the metropolitan of Tomi. Nevertheless, they preferred the collocation '*episcopus Scythiae*' and not the one used by the pope.

78 ACO, IV/1, pp. 12¹² and 186⁹, respectively.

79 Attendance lists: ACO, IV/1, pp. 4⁸, 21⁴, 33⁸, 40⁴, and 204⁵. The list of signatories: ACO, IV/1, p. 225⁶⁻⁷.

80 Chrysos, "Zur Entstehung," pp. 142–143; Price, *The Acts*, 2, p. 293, n. 14.

81 ACO, IV/1, p. 195². Dominic Moreau ("To Baptise," p. 99) wrongly asserts that the pope used the words '*episcopus Scythiae*.'

The analysis presented above shows that both titles were officially used during the 6th century. One of them seems to have expressed the humility sought by the hierarch of Tomi, whereas the other, even if it no longer reflected the specificity of the ecclesiastical organization in Scythia, was still used due to its longevity, being (probably) seen as a prestige title.

An argument in favour of this interpretation is represented by another prestige title still used after the disappearance of the factors that created it. The internal structure of Scythia province after the reorganization in May 536 is presented in *Notitia episcopatum* 3. The see of Tomi is registered with the rank of metropolis and with 14 suffragan bishoprics, all situated in cities of Roman Scythia.⁸² The title is mentioned at the beginning of the rubric: “ἐπαρχία Σκυθίας παραθαλασσία τοῦ Πόντου” (“The province of Scythia, lying on the [Black] Sea coast”). Most probably, this title was inspired by the geographical structure of the ecclesiastical province of Scythia prior to the year 536, when all its episcopal sees (Tomi, Chersonesus, Bosphorus, Odessos, and, for a while, Phanagoria) functioned in cities situated on the Black Sea coast.⁸³ *Notitia* 3 reveals that the title was still officially used also after the reorganization of the province in 536.

The conclusion to be drawn, therefore, is that both titles (*‘episcopus Scythiae’* and ἐπαρχία Σκυθίας παραθαλασσία τοῦ Πόντου) continued to be officially used also after the year 536, being probably considered as part of the historical heritage of this ecclesiastical province and as prestige title of the see of Tomi. However, after 536, they no longer reflected the characteristics that were the basis for their creation.

4.4 Conclusions

The following conclusions can be drawn based on the aspects presented above:

1. Bishop Valentinian of Tomi had the rank of metropolitan. The clearest proof in this respect is the epithet *‘religiosissimus’* (‘the most religious’), used in his case at the Second Council of Constantinople (553). During the council, this honorific epithet was used for the hierarchs having the rank of metropolitans.

⁸² Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum* 3.40.642–656, p. 242.

⁸³ On Phanagoria as a suffragan bishopric of Tomi, see below, subchapter 6.6: ‘The see of Phanagoria.’

2. The term '*episcopus*' ('bishop'), used for Valentinian by Pope Vigilius, Emperor Justinian I, and Constantine (the quaestor of the sacred palace), indicates only his status as hierarch. It does not prove Valentinian's rank of ordinary bishop, however.
3. The collocation '*episcopus Scythiae*' ('bishop of Scythia'), used by Emperor Justinian I and the quaestor Constantine during the Second Council of Constantinople, was only a prestige title at that time (553). It no longer reflected the old characteristic of church organization in Roman Scythia, namely having only one bishop for all the cities of the province.

The Historical Stages of the See of Odessos from Ordinary Bishopric in Scythia to Great Metropolis of Moesia Secunda

The evolution of the rank of the see of Odessos (now Varna, Bulgaria) was briefly discussed in one of the previous subchapters.¹ As the scholarly conclusions on this topic are divergent, it will be treated below anew.²

1 See above, subchapter 2.3.3: ‘The evolution of the ecclesiastical province of Scythia after 381.’

2 On the scholarly opinions on the situation of the episcopal see of Odessos during the 4th–6th centuries and early Christian vestiges found at Varna, see Lili Gajdova, “Zum Problem über die Einbeziehung der Odesser Kirchengemeinde in die Rangliste der autokephalen Archiepiskopate,” *Pulpudeva* 4 (1983), pp. 296–300; Alexander Minchev, “Rannoto khristiānstvo v Odesos i okolnostite mu” [Early Christianity in and around Odessos], *Izvestiā na narodniā muzei Varna/Bulletin du Musée National de Varna* 22 (1986), pp. 31–42; Alexander Minchev, “Early Christian Double Crypt with Reliquaries at Khan Krum Street in Varna (Ancient Odessos),” *Acta Musei Varnensis* 4 (2006), pp. 229–258; Alexander Minchev, “Bodenmosaikien der frühchristlichen Kirche in der Flur Džanavara,” in *Corpus der spätantiken und frühchristlichen Mosaiken Bulgariens*, eds. Renate Pillinger, Alexander Lirsch, and Vanja Popova (Wien: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 2016), pp. 41–47; Alexander Minchev, “The Early Christian Mosaics in the Episcopal Basilica of Odessos (Late 4th–Early 7th C. AD). Preliminary Report,” in *Moesica et Christiana. Studies in Honour of Professor Alexandru Barnea*, eds. Adriana Panaite, Romeo Cîrjan, and Carol Căpiță (Brăila: Istros, 2016), pp. 431–443; Alexander Minchev, “Early Christian Architecture in Bulgaria Twenty Years Later: 1. Early Christian Churches and Monasteries along the Black Sea Coast,” in *Creation of the Late Antique World in the Balkans. Proceedings of the Colloquium Held in Sofia, November, 8–10, 2018*, eds. Ivo Topalilov and Zlatomira Gerdzhikova, (*Annales Balcanici*) 1 (Sofia: Tendril PH, 2021), pp. 69–74; Bistra Nikolova, “The Church of Odessos-Varna between Byzantium, the Bulgarian Tsardom and the Patriarchate of Constantinople,” *Études Balkaniques/Balkan Studies* 34 (1998), nos. 1–2, pp. 93–109. In other studies, the situation of the see of Odessos was evaluated in the context of the analysis of the church organization in Moesia Secunda, see Georgi Atanassov, “Christianity along the Lower Danube Limes in the Roman Provinces of Dacia Ripensis, Moesia Secunda and Scythia Minor (4th–6th c. AD),” in *The Lower Danube Roman Limes (1st–6th C. AD)*, eds. Lyudmil Vagalinski, Nikolay Sharankov, and Sergey Torbatov (Sofia: NIAM-BAS, 2012), pp. 350–364; Nelu Zugravu, “Studiu introductiv, notițe bibliografice, note și comentarii” [Introductory Study, Biobibliographical Notes, Footnotes, and Comments], in Nelu Zugravu, ed., *Fontes Historiae Daco-Romanae Christianitatis* (Iași: Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza,” 2008), p. 93; Alexander Minchev, “Marcianopolis in the 2nd–6th Centuries AD. From a Roman City to a Late Antique Capital,” in *Roman Provincial Capitals under Transition. Proceedings of the International Conference Held in Plovdiv 04.–07. November 2019*, eds. Milena Raycheva

The extant information is not sufficiently clear to permit a straightforward identification of the main historical stages of the see of Odessos. It is difficult to establish the moment of the organization of the bishopric. However, it had been part of the ecclesiastical province of Scythia, and not of Moesia Secunda, for a long period of time. The organization of ecclesiastical Scythia in 381 suggests that the see of Odessos either already existed at that time, or was founded exactly at that moment.³ The building of the oldest Christian basilica discovered to date at Varna is dated to c. late 4th century.⁴

The historical information that offers insight into the evolution of the Odessitan see is presented below.

5.1 *Encyclia* (457–458)

The oldest written document mentioning the see of Odessos is the response letter of the hierarchs in Moesia Secunda to Emperor Leo I (457–474), preserved in *Encyclia* (457–458).⁵ In its content, the name of Dizas/Dizza of Odessos appears in the greeting phrase in the opening of the letter and at the end of the document, in the rubric with signatures.⁶ The term ‘*Scythiae*’ in Dizas’ signature reveals that the see of Odessos was part of the ecclesiastical province of Scythia. This is a situation that occurred, most probably, in the year 381, when this ecclesiastical province was founded.⁷

These two mentions are insufficient to establish the ecclesiastical rank of the see of Odessos in 457–458. Dizas is mentioned in both places as ‘*episcopus*’ (‘bishop’), and in the signature he named his city of residence ‘*civitas*’ (‘city’). However, these terms do not exclude the possibility for him to have had the

and Martin Steskal, (Österreichisches Archäologisches Institut. Sonderschriften) 61 (Vienna: Holzhausen, 2021), pp. 255–286.

3 On the foundation of ecclesiastical Scythia, see above, subchapter 2.3.2: ‘Dating the foundation of ecclesiastical Scythia.’

4 Minchev, “The Early Christian Mosaics,” p. 433; Minchev, “Early Christian Architecture,” p. 69.

5 On *Encyclia* (457–458), see above, subchapter 2.2.2: “The *Encyclia* (457–458) of emperor Leo I.”

6 The greeting phrase: “*Domino piissimo uictori semper augusto Leoni Marcianus, Martialis, Minofilus, Marcellus Petrus et Dizas episcopi secundae Mysiae*” (“To the most pious victor Lord Leo, perpetual Augustus, from Marcian, Martialis, Minofilus, Marcellus, Peter, and Dizas bishops in Moesia Secunda”) [*Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum* (hereafter cited as *ACO*), 11/5, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1936), p. 32¹⁻²]. Dizas’ signature: “*Dizza episcopus ciuitatis Odissae Scythiae similiter*” (“Dizza bishop of the city of Odessos in Scythia, similarly”) (*ACO*, 11/5, p. 32³¹).

7 See above, subchapter 2.3.2: ‘Dating the foundation of ecclesiastical Scythia.’

rank of titular metropolitan (autocephalous archbishop), as in *Encyclia* there are many cases of metropolitans who called themselves ‘*episcopus*’ and/or used the term ‘*civitas*’ for their city of residence.⁸

Nevertheless, the rank of the see of Odessos at the time of Dizas’ reign can be established on the basis of the list with the addressees of the Imperial letter in *Encyclia*. As already shown, the direct addressees of Emperor Leo I’s questionnaire letter were the metropolitans (including the titular ones).⁹ The absence of Dizas’ name from the list with the addressees proves that he did not hold this rank, being instead an ordinary bishop.¹⁰

The aspects detailed above show the following: 1. The see of Odessos had the rank of ordinary bishopric in 457–458; 2. It was part of the ecclesiastical province of Scythia at that time, serving as a suffragan bishopric of the metropolis of Tomi.

5.2 The Home Synod in 518

The second document mentioning the see of Odessos is the list of signatories of the Home Synod of 518 (20 July). It contains the signatures of 42 participants, grouped according to the hierarchical criterion. The metropolitans’ signatures can be found in the first part of the list (positions 1–8).¹¹ There are six metropolitans with suffragan bishops (positions 1–3 and 6–8) and two titular metropolitans (positions 4–5). In the second part of the list (positions 9–42) there are the suffragan bishops’ signatures.¹² John of Ydeton’s signature can be found in the second part of the list, in position 36: “Ἰωάννης ἐλέει θεοῦ ἐπίσκοπος τῆς Ὑδητῶν πόλεως ὑπέγραψα” (“John by the mercy of God bishop of the city of Ydeton, I have signed”).¹³ Most scholars have identified the name of Ydeton with that of the city of Odessos.¹⁴

8 See above, subchapter 2.2.2: ‘The *Encyclia* (457–458) of emperor Leo I.’

9 See above, subchapter 2.2.2: ‘The *Encyclia* (457–458) of emperor Leo I.’

10 This idea is sustained also by Evangelos Chrysos [“Zur Entstehung der Institution der Autokephalen Erzbistümer,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 62 (1969), pp. 266–267, n. 14], Lili Gajdova (“Zum Problem,” p. 298), Kazimierz Iłski [“Korespondencja biskupów Mezyjskich” (The Correspondence of the Moesian Bishops), in *Studia Moesiaca*, eds. Leszek Mrozewicz and Kazimierz (Poznań: V1S, 1994), pp. 132–134], and Bistra Nikolova (“The Church of Odessos”, pp. 94–95 and 97).

11 *ACO*, III, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1940), p. 65^{2–17}.

12 *ACO*, III, pp. 65^{18–66}³⁴.

13 *ACO*, III, p. 66²³.

14 Michael Le Quien, *Oriens christianus*, 1 (Paris: Ex typographia regia, 1740), col. 1226; Jacques Zeiller, *Les origines chrétiennes dans les provinces danubiennes de l’empire romain* (Paris:

The position of this signature in the final part of the group of suffragan bishops is an indication that John had the rank of ordinary bishop and not of metropolitan or autocephalous archbishop (titular metropolitan) at that time. Therefore, based on this document, it can be established that in the year 518 the see of Odessos still had the rank of a suffragan bishopric. However, it is not possible to identify to what ecclesiastical province the bishopric of Odessos belonged at that time, as John did not mention its name in his signature.

De Boccard, 1918), p. 166; Henri Leclercq, "Mésie," in *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie chrétienne et de Liturgie*, XI/1, eds. Fernand Cabrol and Henri Leclercq (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1933), col. 507; Gajdova, "Zum Problem," pp. 298–299; Minchev, "Rannoto khristiânstvo," p. 32; Ilski, „Korespondencja,” p. 133; Nikolova, "The Church of Odessos," p. 95; Nelu Zugravu, *Erezii și schisme la Dunărea Mijlocie și de Jos în mileniul I* [Heresies and Schisms on the Middle and Lower Danube in the First Millennium] (Iași: Presa Bună, 1999), p. 103; Manfred Oppermann, *Das frühe Christentum an der Westküste des Schwarzen Meeres und im anschließenden Binnenland: historische und archäologische Zeugnisse*, (Schriften des Zentrums für Archäologie und Kulturgeschichte des Schwarzmeerraumes) 19 (Langenweißbach: Beier & Beran, 2010), p. 45 (as a possibility); Eva Dimitrova, "Episkopski khramove i rezidentsii v provinciia Moesia Secunda prez IV–VI v. (Novae, Durostorum, Zikideva, Marcianopolis, Odessos) (I chast)" [Episcopal Churches and Residences in Province Moesia Secunda at 4th–6th C. AD (Novae, Durostorum, Zikideva, Marcianopolis, Odessos) (Part 1)], *Zhurnal za istoricheski i arheologicheski izsledvaniia*/Journal of Historical and Archaeological Research (2013), no. 2, p. 64; Hristo Preshlenov, "Ronno-khristiânskata cathedra episcopalis v gradovete po ūguzapadnoto Chernomorie: obzor na khagiografskite i prosopografskite dannii" [Early Cristian Cathedra Episcopalis along the Southwest Black Sea Region: Synopsis of the Hagiographical and the Prosopographical Data], *Izvestiia na narodniia muzei Burgas/Izvestija-Burgas* 5 (2015), p. 64; Dan Ruscu, "The Ecclesiastical Network of the Regions on the Western and Northern Shores of the Black Sea in Late Antiquity," in *The Danubian Lands between the Black, Aegean and Adriatic Seas (7th Century BC–10th Century AD). Proceedings of the Fifth International Congress on Black Sea Antiquities (Belgrade, 17–21 September 2013)*, ed. Gocha R. Tsetskladze, Alexandru Avram, and James Hargrave (Oxford: Archaeopress Publishing Ltd, 2015), p. 191 (as a possibility). A different point of view is that of Ernst Honigmann [*Évêques et évêchés monophysites d'Asie antérieure au VI^e siècle*, (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium) 127 (Subsidia) 2 (Leuven: Durbecq, 1951), p. 136] and Rudolf Schieffer [*ACO*, IV/3.1, ed. Johannes Straub (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1974), p. 283; *ACO*, IV/3.3, ed. Johannes Straub (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1984), p. 180], who considered that John was a bishop of Hyde (Lycaonia). Giorgio Fedalto [*Hierarchia Ecclesiastica Orientalis*, 1 (Padova: Messaggero, 1988), pp. 270 and 348] placed Bishop John both in the rubric of the bishopric of Hyde (making reference to the study of Ernst Honigmann), and in that of the bishopric of Odessos (with reference to the study of Michael Le Quien). In both places, Fedalto has no reference to the document. This suggests that he did not realize that the two identifications were based on the same signature.

5.3 *Novella* 65 (23 March 538)

The third document mentioning the name of a hierarch of Odessos is *Novella* 65 (23 March 538). This is a legislative act by which Emperor Justinian I (527–565) permitted the alienation of church property in Moesia Secunda with the aim of obtaining the necessary funds to redeem the captives and help the poor. *Novella* was issued at the request of Martin of Odessos.

From the outset, what can easily be noticed is that the title of the *Novella* does not mention the alienation of Odessos church property, but of that of Moesia Secunda Church: “*De alienatione rerum ecclesiae Mysiae relictarum pro captivorum redemptione et pauperum alimentis*” (“Concerning the alienation of property left to the Church of Mysia [Secunda] for the redemption of captives and the support of the poor”).¹⁵

Similarly, in one of the paragraphs of the *Novella*, the right to sell church property is granted at the level of the whole province of Moesia Secunda: “*in his tantummodo speciebus permittimus et venditionem hac speciali lege in memorata provincia fieri*” (“in these cases we permit by this special law, the sale (of such property) in that province [i.e., Moesia Secunda] to be made”).¹⁶

This wording pleads in favour of the interpretation that Martin represented the interests of the whole Church of the province of Moesia Secunda in front of Emperor Justinian I, not only those of the Church in Odessos. In this case, he must have held the rank of metropolitan of the province.

However, the content of the law also includes certain phrases that could be interpreted that the right to sell church property was reserved only to Martin and his Church, and not to the other hierarchs in Moesia Secunda:

Martino viro sanctissimo episcopo Odissitanae civitatis formam et ante legem nostram dedimus prohibentem eum ecclesiasticas res vendere, ne qui ex potentioribus ei necessitatem imponant secundum suum propositum res ecclesiasticas alienare. (before this law we forbade Martinus, holy bishop of Odessus to sell church-property, so that the magnates might not force him to alienate church-property according to their pleasure.)¹⁷

15 *Corpus Iuris Civilis* (hereafter cited as *CIC*), 3, ed. Rudolf Schöll (Berlin: Weidmannos, 1912), p. 339²⁻³; *The Novels of Justinian*, trans. Samuel P. Scott (Cincinnati, 1932). Available at https://droitromain.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/Anglica/Novellae_Scott.htm. Accessed 2022 May 10.

16 *CIC*, 3, p. 339²²⁻²³; trans. Scott.

17 *CIC*, 3, p. 339⁷⁻¹⁰; trans. Scott.

also: "*Iam petivit sibi permitti per legem specialem hoc facere*" ("He [i.e., Martin] now asks that this be permitted to him by a special law"),¹⁸ and:

Et si hoc ita subsecutum fuerit, habeat venditio firmitatem et liceat sine metu alterius legis et oeconomis ecclesiasticis et viro sanctissimo episcopo vendere et emptoribus habere easdem res firmo iure. (And if this is done this way, the sale shall be valid and the stewards of the church and the holy bishop may sell without fear of another law, and the purchasers shall have the property in full right.)¹⁹

Even the paragraph where the right to alienate church property is recognized in the entire province of Moesia Secunda mentions only the church, not the churches, the borders of the church, and not of the churches, the walls of the city, and not of the cities.²⁰ This phrasing might indicate that the reference is only to one city, namely Odessos, to the borders of its Church and to its properties, and not to the other cities of the province, as well, or to the other Churches and their properties. In such a case, it may have been a law permitting the alienation of Odessitan property, situated on the territory of the province of Moesia Secunda, in some cases at a great distance from the city and even outside its administrative territory. As such, Martin's ecclesiastical rank cannot be established based only on this information. Moreover, he could have been an ordinary bishop, a titular metropolitan (autocephalous archbishop), or the metropolitan of the province.

Nevertheless, it is not excluded that this fragment may have settled the general rules, valid for any of the cities and bishoprics of the province. In this case, Martin must have had the rank of metropolitan of the province, in this quality representing the interests of all the Churches in Moesia Secunda in front of Emperor Justinian I.

The honorific epithet used by Emperor Justinian I for Martin in the addressing formula of *Novella* 65 cannot be used to identify his rank within the Church. The emperor used three times the term '*sanctissimus*' ('the most holy') within the content of the legislative act, when he referred to the hierarch of Odessos.²¹ Establishing the ecclesiastical rank based on this epithet, however,

18 *CIC*, 3, p. 339¹⁷; trans. Scott.

19 *CIC*, 3, p. 339²⁵⁻²⁷; trans. Scott.

20 See *CIC*, 3, p. 339²⁰⁻²⁵.

21 *CIC*, 3, p. 339^{7-8, 14, 27}.

is uncertain as it had been used for all the episcopal ranks before the Second Council of Constantinople (553).²²

The terms *'episcopus'* ('bishop') and *'civitas'* ('city'), used in *Novella* 65, are also irrelevant, as in other *Novellae* they are also used for hierarchs or cities with the rank of metropolitans and metropolises, respectively. For example, in *Novella* 11 (14 April 535), the hierarch of Thessalonica, who was the metropolitan of the province of Macedonia Prima and primate of the diocese of Macedonia, is mentioned as *'episcopus'*.²³ Then, in *Novella* 120, Odessos and Tomi are mentioned as *'civitates/πόλεις'* ('cities') at a time (9 May 544) when they both had the status of *'metropoles/μητρόπολεις'* ('metropolises') (see below).²⁴

However, there is a clue that advances the identification of Martin's episcopal rank. Several years later, in *Novella* 120, Emperor Justinian I confirmed the right to sell properties—with the purpose of obtaining funds to redeem the captives—to the Church in Odessos, and not to that of Moesia.²⁵ Mention must be made, as shown below, that the see of Odessos had the rank of great metropolis of Moesia Secunda at that time. By the content of the same law, the see of Tomi, which was the great metropolis of Scythia, was also granted the right to alienate church properties. These two aspects support the interpretation that the right to alienate church properties was granted to metropolitan sees, and by extension, most probably, to their suffragan bishoprics. Nevertheless, even if it were admitted that the right to alienate church properties was granted only to the Church of Odessos by *Novella* 65, and not to the other episcopal sees in Moesia Secunda, the possibility for Odessos to have had the rank of metropolis of the province in 538 (as in 544), is still possible.

As a conclusion, even if the rank within the Church of the see of Odessos in the year 538 cannot be established with certainty, it seems probable that it may have been that of a great metropolis of Moesia Secunda.

22 Evangelos Chrysos, *Die Bischofslisten des v. ökumenischen Konzils (553)* (Bonn: Habelt, 1966), pp. 65–67, n. 80. Also there, Chrysos, referring to the text of *Novella* 65, asserted that Martin of Odessos had the rank of a simple bishop. The Greek scholar provided no argument in support of this statement.

23 *CIC*, 3, p. 94^{24–25, 39}: *'Thessalonicensi episcopo'* ('the bishop of Thessalonica'). On the rank of the see of Thessalonica, see Chrysos, *Die Bischofslisten*, pp. 156–157.

24 *CIC*, 3, p. 588^{4–5}: *'Sanctissimas vero ecclesias Odessi et Tomeos civitatum'* / *'Ταῖς δὲ ἀγιωτάταις ἐκκλησίαις Ὁδησσοῦ καὶ Τόμεως τῶν πόλεων'* ('the most holy Churches of the cities of Odessos and Tomi').

25 See below, subchapter 5.4: *'Novella* 120 (9 May 544).'

5.4 *Novella* 120 (9 May 544)

The fourth document mentioning the see of Odessos is *Novella* 120 (9 May 544). In this text, Justinian I settled the conditions regarding the alienation of church properties in the empire. The final part of the document (chapter 9) mentions the special cases of three Churches (Odessos, Tomi, and Jerusalem), reconfirming the older rights that had been granted to them regarding the alienation of church properties.²⁶

The rights of the Churches in Odessos and Tomis are stipulated within the content of the same phrase:

Sanctissimas vero ecclesias Odessi et Tomeos civitatum praecipimus alienare res immobiles pro captivorum redemptione, nisi sub hac condicione possessiones aliqui eis dederunt, ut nullo modo has alienent. / Ταῖς δὲ ἁγιωτάταις ἐκκλησίαις Ὀδησοῦ καὶ Τόμεως τῶν πόλεων ἐπιτρέπομεν ἐκποιεῖν πράγματα ἀκίνητα ὑπὲρ τῆς τῶν αἰχμαλώτων ἀναρρύσεως, πλὴν εἰ μὴ ἐπὶ ταύτῃ τῇ αἰρέσει κτήσεις τινὲς αὐταῖς ἐδόθησαν, ἐφ' ᾧ κατὰ μηδένα τρόπον ταύτας ἐκποιεῖσθαι. (We permit the holy Churches of Odessus and Tomis to alienate immovable property for the redemption of captives, unless, perchance, some possessions have been given upon condition that they should not be alienated.)²⁷

There are no other details within the content of the law on the right to alienate church properties in the case of the two episcopal sees. Immediately after this phrase, the dispositions regarding the Church of Jerusalem are listed.

Even if the fragment about Odessos and Tomi is very short, its value for the topic under discussion is of utmost importance. The order in which the two episcopal sees are mentioned most probably reflect their relation within the Constantinopolitan hierarchy. More precisely, the mention of the see of Odessos before that of Tomi must have been justified by the primacy of the first as compared to the second within the hierarchy of the episcopal sees in

26 The Church of Odessos had obtained the right to alienate its properties in *Novella* 65 [see above, subchapter 5.3: '*Novella* 65 (23 March 538)']. The Church of Jerusalem had obtained the same right in *Novella* 40 (18 May 535) (*CIC*, 3, pp. 258–261). No extant *Novella* show that this right had also been granted to the Church of Tomi. Nevertheless, taking into account the cases of the other two Churches (of Odessos and Jerusalem), the previous issue of a similar document for the see of Tomi seems very probable.

27 *CIC*, 3, p. 588^{4-7/4-8}; trans. Scott.

the patriarchate of Constantinople. If the relation between them had been different, meaning that Tomi had taken precedence over Odessos, then Tomi would have been mentioned first in the phrase (followed by Odessos).

This honorific primacy helps establish the church rank of the see of Odessos in 544. Tomi certainly had the rank of a great metropolis of Scythia at that time.²⁸ In this case, Odessos must have had the same rank within the Church. Had it been a titular metropolis (autocephalous archbishopric) or ordinary bishopric, Odessos could not have taken precedence over Tomi. Moreover, to appear before Tomi, its former metropolitan see, within the Constantinopolitan hierarchy, Odessos must have inherited this primacy from another great metropolis. Therefore, it is not about the creation of a new ecclesiastical province, with Odessos as great metropolis, but about the overtaking by this episcopal see of the rank of great metropolis within a province that came before Scythia within the Constantinopolitan hierarchy. It could be only one of the other ecclesiastical provinces of the diocese of Thrace (Europa, Thrace, Rhodope, Haemimontus, or Moesia Secunda). Of all these, it was natural for Odessos to have become the new great metropolis of Moesia Secunda. This means that the see of Odessos was transferred from the ecclesiastical province of Scythia to that of Moesia Secunda and, within the latter (either at the time of the transfer, or later), it overtook the rank of metropolis from the see of Marcianopolis. Thus, Odessos inherited the place of Marcianopolis within the Constantinopolitan hierarchy, taking precedence over its former metropolitan see (Tomi).²⁹

Briefly, in the year 544, the see of Odessos had the rank of a great metropolis of the province of Moesia Secunda. Based on its new status, it preceded Tomi within the hierarchy of the ecclesiastical sees of the patriarchate of Constantinople.

5.5 *Notitiae episcopatum*

The last documents that offer information about the situation of the see of Odessos are *Notitiae episcopatum*. Within their content, Odessos is registered with two different ranks: 1. Autocephalous archbishopric (titular metropolis);

28 See above, subchapter 2.3.3: 'The evolution of the ecclesiastical province of Scythia after 381.'

29 The primacy of the see of Odessos over that of Tomi, following the raising of Odessos to the rank of a great metropolis of Moesia Secunda, means that Moesia Secunda came before Scythia within the Constantinopolitan hierarchy.

2. Great metropolis. As these two ecclesiastical ranks are incompatible,³⁰ they reveal two different historical phases of the see of Odessos.

Odessos appears with the rank of autocephalous archbishopric (titular metropolis) in *Notitiae* 1–2 and 4–5: “α’ ἐπαρχία Μυσίας - ὁ [i.e., ἀρχιεπίσκοπος] Ὀδησοῦ” (“1. the province of Moesia—the one [i.e., archbishop] of Odessos”).³¹ This short reference indicates that, in a certain historical moment, the see of Odessos had the rank of autocephalous archbishopric (titular metropolis). It is impossible to date this phase on the basis of the four *Notitiae* (1–2 and 4–5). It is only certain that, at that time, Odessos was no longer part of ecclesiastical province of Scythia, but of Moesia (ἐπαρχία Μυσίας), most probably Moesia Secunda.

As a great metropolis, the see of Odessos is registered in *Notitia* 3. The information appears in the fourth part of the document, where the internal structure of each province is exposed:

ΛΖ' ἐπαρχία Μυσίας α' / α' Ὀδησοῦς μητρόπολις / β' ὁ [sc. ἐπίσκοπος] Νόβων / γ' ὁ Ἀππιαρίας / δ' ὁ Δοροστόλου / ε' ὁ Μαρκιανουπόλεως / ζ' ὁ Ἀβρίτου / ζ' ὁ Νικοπόλεως / η' ὁ [Παλαιστίνης] (37 the province of Moesia 1 / 1 Odessos metropolis / 2 the one [i.e., bishop] of Novae / 3 the one of Appiaria / 4 the one of Durostorum / 5 the one of Marcianopolis / 6 the one of Abritus / 7 the one of Nicopolis / 8 the one of Palaistene)³²

The registration of the see of Odessos as a great metropolis in this document is extremely important. It confirms the correctness of the previous conclusions regarding the rank of the see in 544, issued based on the information in *Novella* 120. In fact, *Notitia* 3 mentions, in an altered form, both the name and the structure of the province where Odessos held the rank of great metropolis. The name of the province appears in the document as ‘Moesia 1’ (ἐπαρχία Μυσίας α’). This is, in fact, Moesia Secunda. The existence of an ecclesiastical province with the name of Moesia Prima on the territory of Moesia Secunda in 544 (the year when *Novella* 120 was issued, confirming the existence of this province of the metropolis of Odessos) is improbable. Furthermore, in the structure of the rubric dedicated to the metropolis of Odessos, as it appears

30 See above, the beginning of subchapter 2.2.1: ‘The end of the 4th and the first half of the 5th century AD.’

31 Jean Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae. Texte critique, introduction et notes*, (Géographie ecclésiastique de l’empire Byzantin) 1 (Paris: Institut français d’études byzantines, 1981), 1.39, p. 205; similarly, 2.42, p. 217; 4.40, p. 250; 5.44, p. 265.

32 Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum* 3.36.603–610, p. 241.

in *Notitia* 3, the episcopal sees on the territory of Moesia Secunda (Novae, Appiaria, Durostorum, Marcianopolis, Abritus, Nicopolis, and Palaistene) can be found.³³ Moreover, the real province of Moesia Prima is mentioned by Emperor Justinian I in *Novella* 11 (14 April 535), when he transferred it under the jurisdiction of the archbishopric of Justiniana Prima.³⁴ This evidence demonstrates that in the protograph that served as a source to the writing of the rubric for Odessos metropolis in *Notitia* 3, the name of the province appeared as Moesia (Secunda). Its alteration into Moesia I was, most probably, the result of a compiler/copyist's error.

Of utmost importance is also the mention in *Notitia* 3 of the see of Marcianopolis, the former great metropolis of Moesia Secunda, as a suffragan bishopric of Odessos metropolis. It confirms the second interpretation from *Novella* 120, namely that Odessos overtook the rank of a great metropolis from the see of Marcianopolis within the province of Moesia Secunda, following a reorganization of the Church previous to the year 544. This ecclesiastical reorganization certainly occurred after the year 518, when the see of Odessos is attested with the rank of ordinary bishopric.

5.6 Daniel of Odessos

The last information referring to a hierarchy of Odessos is provided by a tombstone found at Varna, on which two inscriptions are carved:

Ἐνθάδε κ[ατάκι]/τε ὁ ὀσιώτ[ατος]/ καὶ ταπιν[ὸς Δα]/νιήλ (Here lies the most holy and humble Daniel)

Ἐνθάδε κατάκ[ιτε ὁ ὀσιώτα]/τος Δουλκίσιμος ἐ[πίσκοπος] / Δωροστόλου' τελε[υτῶ δέ] / μη(νός) Ἰανουαρίου κζ', ἐν[δ(ικτιώνος)] (Here lies the most holy Dulcissimus bishop of Durostorum; he dies on the month of January 27, indiction)³⁵

33 Most likely, 'Palaistene' ('Παλαιστήνη') is an altered form of the name of the city of Palmatae (now Onogur, Bulgaria), see Ionuț Holubeanu, *Organizarea bisericească în Scythia și Moesia Secunda în secolele IV–VII* [The Ecclesiastical Organization in Scythia and Moesia Secunda in the 4th–7th Centuries] (Bucharest: Basilica, 2018), pp. 178–180.

34 *CIC*, 3, p. 94^{5–8}.

35 Veselin Beševliev, *Spätgriechische und spätlateinische Inschriften aus Bulgarien* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1964), p. 76.

Daniel was supposedly one of the hierarchs of Odessos.³⁶ The dating of his reign and of his death based on this inscription is quite vague, though (5th–6th centuries). Not even the epithet ‘ὁσιώτατος’ (‘the most holy’) can precisely establish his rank within the Church. This epithet, the Latin equivalent of ‘*sanctissimus*,’ was used in the 4th–6th centuries for all the episcopal ranks.³⁷ In these circumstances, this inscription is less important for the present topic.

5.7 Odessos as an Autocephalous Archbishopric and as a Great Metropolis

The analysis above indicates that the see of Odessos had the following ranks:

1. In 457–458 (*Encyclia*), ordinary bishopric, suffragan of the metropolis of Tomi in the ecclesiastical province of Scythia;
2. In 518 (the signatories’ list of the Home Synod in that year), ordinary bishopric in an unknown ecclesiastical province;
3. In 538 (*Novella* 65), possibly great metropolis of the province of Moesia Secunda;
4. In 544 (*Novella* 120, confirmed by *Notitia* 3), great metropolis of Moesia Secunda;
5. Undated historical phase (*Notitiae* 1–2 and 4–5), autocephalous archbishopric (titular metropolis) in the province of Moesia Secunda.

Furthermore, there are two other important aspects to explain: 1. When the see of Odessos acquired the rank of autocephalous archbishopric (titular metropolis), as appears in *Notitiae* 1–2 and 4–5; 2. When it held the rank of great metropolis of Moesia Secunda, as it is registered in *Notitia* 3.

The first step in clearing these aspects is the explanation of the chronological relation between these two historical phases. More precisely, was Odessos raised first to the rank of autocephalous archbishopric (titular metropolis) after the year 518, when it is last attested with the rank of suffragan bishopric, and then, in a subsequent historical phase, to that of great metropolis? Or was

36 Beševliev, *Spätgriechische*, pp. 76–77, no. 107; Georgi Atanasov, *Khristiānskiūat Durostorum-Drūstūr* [The Christian Durostorum-Drastar] (Veliko Tarnovo: Zograf, 2007), pp. 87–88; Nikolova, “The Church of Odessos,” p. 95; Minchev, “Rannoto khristiānstvo,” p. 32; Kazimierz Ilski, “W sprawie uzupełnienia listy biskupów Mezyjskich” [On Completing the List of the Moesian Bishops], in *Studia Moesiaca*, eds. Leszek Mrozewicz and Kazimierz Ilski (Poznań: VIS, 1994), pp. 137–140; Preshlenov, “Ronnokhristiānskata,” p. 65; Dimitrova, “Episkopski khramove (1),” p. 64.

37 Chrysos, *Die Bischofslisten*, pp. 58–60 and 64–67.

the chronological order of achieving these ranks reverse (first great metropolis and then autocephalous archbishopric)?

If the evolution of the see of Odessos was ordinary bishopric → autocephalous archbishopric (titular metropolis) → great metropolis, then it must have had the rank of autocephalous archbishopric after 518, when it is attested as an ordinary bishopric, and before 544, when it is attested as a great metropolis. If the evolution of its rank was ordinary bishopric → great metropolis → autocephalous archbishopric (titular metropolis), then it must have become a great metropolis in the period 518–544 and demoted to the rank of autocephalous archbishopric (titular metropolis) sometime after 544.

An important indication for the understanding of this chronological relation is the leading position Odessos held within the hierarchy of the ecclesiastical sees of the patriarchate of Constantinople at the time when it had the rank of autocephalous archbishopric. In all *Notitiae* (1–2 and 4–5) where it is registered with this rank, Odessos appears on the first position within the list of autocephalous archbishoprics (titular metropoleis). Scholars proposed two possible explanations for this situation. According to one of them (erroneous, in fact), the see of Odessos would have reached this position based on its longevity as an autocephalous archbishopric. It had been proposed that it was raised to this rank even before the First Council of Ephesus (431).³⁸ But this explanation has been justifiably rejected based on the information in *Encyclia* (457–458) and in the signatories' list of the Home Synod of 518.³⁹ As already demonstrated, Odessos still had the rank of ordinary bishopric at that time.

The second explanation proposed was that Odessos reached this leading position for secular, not church-related reasons. Both the raising to this rank and the first place within the group of autocephalous archbishoprics would have been due to the establishment in this city of the administrative headquarters of *quaestura exercitus Iustiniani* in the year 536.⁴⁰

This second explanation can be verified based on the evolution of the see of Tomi' rank within the Church. What is to be noticed from the beginning is the fact that Tomi is in the second position, immediately after Odessos, in the same

38 Ernst Gerland, *Corpus notitiarum episcopatum ecclesiae orientalis Graecae. I. Die Genesis der Notitia episcopatum. 1. Einleitung* (Istanbul: Socii Assumptionistae Chalcedonenses, 1931), pp. 10–12; Hans-Georg Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich*, (Byzantinisches Handbuch im Rahmen des Handbuchs de Altertumswissenschaft) 11/1 (München: Beck, 1959), pp. 175–176.

39 Chrysos, "Zur Entstehung," pp. 266–267; Gajdova, "Zum Problem," pp. 297–299; Ilski, "Korespondencja," pp. 132–134. And Bistra Nikolova ("The Church of Odessos," pp. 94–95 and 97) accepts the status of ordinary bishopric of the see of Odessos in 457–458.

40 Gajdova, "Zum Problem," pp. 296–297 and 300.

lists of autocephalous archbishoprics (titular metropoleis) in *Notitiae* 1–2 and 4–5.⁴¹ As already shown, this position is based on church-related and not secular reasons. Thus, between 381 and 553, Tomi is repeatedly attested (years 381, 400, 430–431, 449, 457–458, 519–520, and 553) with the rank of metropolis. Moreover, it is attested with suffragan bishoprics on three occasions (years 381, 457–458, and 519).⁴² This information leads to the conclusion that between 381 and, at least, 553, it continuously had the rank of great metropolis, and not that of titular metropolis (autocephalous archbishopric). On the other hand, as already shown in *Notitiae* 1–2 and 4–5, Tomi is registered with the rank of autocephalous archbishopric.

This is a rank inferior to that of a great metropolis and incompatible with it. An episcopal see could not be a great metropolis and an autocephalous archbishopric at the same time. Therefore, Tomi could certainly not have been an autocephalous archbishopric (titular metropolis) between 381 and, at least, 553, as it held the rank of great metropolis at that time. Moreover, the possibility for the registration of Tomi in *Notitiae episcopatum* with the rank of autocephalous archbishopric to have taken place before 381 is excluded, as *Notitiae episcopatum* are certainly documents written after the First Council of Constantinople (381). Only at this council, by canon 3, was the importance of the see of Constantinople recognized within the Church.⁴³ Moreover, the existence of titular metropoleis that later became autocephalous archbishoprics, was canonically organized only at the Council of Chalcedon (451), by canon 12.⁴⁴ In this case, the see of Tomi could have become an autocephalous archbishopric only after the year 553. This event most probably took place after the destruction of the cities in Scythia and the disappearance of their bishoprics following the inroads of the Avars and Slavs at the end of the 6th century and the beginning of the following one.⁴⁵ Without suffragan bishoprics, Tomi could no longer function as a great metropolis. In order to regulate its canonical functioning, the patriarchate of Constantinople had to demote it to the rank of autocephalous archbishopric, namely a metropolis without suffragan bishoprics. Following this demotion, Tomi was granted the second position within the list of autocephalous archbishoprics in the patriarchate

41 Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum* 1.40, p. 205; 2.43, p. 217; 4.41, p. 250; 5.45, p. 265.

42 See above, subchapter 2.3.3: 'The evolution of the ecclesiastical province of Scythia after 381.'

43 See Norman P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1 (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990), p. 32.

44 See Tanner, *Decrees*, p. 93.

45 See above, subchapter 2.3.3: 'The evolution of the ecclesiastical province of Scythia after 381.'

of Constantinople, after the see of Odessos. This leading position must have been a measure meant to compensate for its demotion from the rank of great metropolis to that of autocephalous archbishopric. In other words, a former great metropolis, demoted for objective reasons (unfavourable historical conditions), was granted a leading position compared to most contemporary autocephalous archbishoprics.

It is noteworthy that Odessos is the only see that Tomi did not surpass in the Constantinopolitan hierarchy of autocephalous archbishoprics. The most plausible explanation for this situation is that, in its turn, Odessos had previously held the rank of great metropolis. Had it not been so, Tomi would have come first in the Constantinopolitan hierarchy of autocephalous archbishoprics. Besides, as already shown, Odessos could come before Tomi in the Constantinopolitan hierarchy only through its promotion to the rank of great metropolis of Moesia Secunda. Therefore, placing the see of Odessos in the first position on the list of autocephalous archbishoprics, and that of Tomi in the second, finds its explanation in that, in a previous historical phase, they both had the rank of great metropoleis.

The accuracy of this explanation is also confirmed by the conclusions drawn from *Novella* 120. As already shown, the information exposed in this document proves that Odessos was a great metropolis of Moesia Secunda in 544. In these conditions, it becomes evident that, at the moment of the demotion of Tomi [*post* 612 (?)], Odessos had already held the rank of great metropolis.

As a conclusion, Odessos, just like Tomi, was first great metropolis and then titular metropolis (autocephalous archbishopric).

The evolution of the ecclesiastical rank of the see of Tomi provides indications also for the dating of Odessos' demotion to the rank of autocephalous archbishopric. This most likely occurred after the year 544. On the other hand, it is less probable for this event to have taken place before the inroads of the Avars and Slavs at the end of the 6th and the beginning of the following century. Major events of secular or ecclesiastical nature, that could have significantly affected the situation in the province, are not known in Moesia Secunda between 544 and 586/7 (the beginning of the inroads). In this case, the only plausible explanation that can be currently proposed is that Odessos, like Tomi, was demoted as a result of the dissolution of its suffragan bishoprics during the inroads of the Avars and Slavs. The similar situation on the territory of provinces Moesia Secunda and Scythia at that time (the end of the 6th–the beginning of the 7th century) is confirmed also through archaeological discoveries.⁴⁶

46 See Alexandru Madgearu, "The End of the Lower Danubian Limes: A Violent or a Peaceful Process?" *Studia Antiqua et Archaeologica* 12 (2006), pp. 151-168; Alexandru Madgearu,

Briefly, the see of Odessos was demoted to the rank of autocephalous archbishopric in the 7th century [*post* 612 (?)], within the same process of reorganization of the church structures in the Lower Danube region, initiated by the patriarchate of Constantinople following the inroads of the Avars and Slavs.

Therefore, it is necessary to clarify when Odessos became a great metropolis. Of utmost importance in this respect is the information offered within canon 12 of the Council of Chalcedon (451), which regulated the functioning of the titular metropoleis. It allowed the existence of two types of metropoleis within each ecclesiastical province: a great metropolis and the titular metropoleis. The difference between them was determined by the civil rank of the settlements where they had their residences. To be more precise, the existence of only one great metropolis was accepted within every province. It had its residence in the administrative capital city of the province: ‘ἡ κατὰ ἀλήθειαν μητρόπολις’/‘*vera metropolis*’ (‘the real metropolis [of the province]’).⁴⁷ The rank of titular metropolis was accepted for the episcopal sees that had their residence in any of the other cities of the province, which had achieved the honorific rank of civil metropolis. The canon stipulated that these sees may be granted only the honour of a metropolis [‘τῆς τιμῆς’/‘*honore*’ (‘honorary’)], but not also the effective rights of such a rank, that continued to be reserved only to the great metropolis of the province.⁴⁸

Based on these provisions, the conclusion to be drawn is that the raising of the see of Odessos to the rank of a great metropolis of Moesia Secunda resulted from the raising of this city, instead of Marcianopolis, to the status of capital of the province. If such a change had not occurred, but the city of Odessos had become an ordinary civil metropolis, then its see would have been raised only to the rank of a titular metropolis (autocephalous archbishopric). Moreover, the fact that the see of Marcianopolis was registered at the rubric of Odessos metropolis in *Notitia* 3 as a suffragan bishopric leads to the conclusion that, following the transfer of the administrative headquarters of the province, its city of residence lost the rank of civil metropolis, as well. Otherwise, if Marcianopolis had preserved this rank after the transfer of the province’s administrative headquarters to Odessos, its episcopal see would have become a titular metropolis (autocephalous archbishopric).

“The Church in the Final Period of the Late Roman Danubian Provinces,” in *Antiquitas Istro-Pontica. Mélanges d’archéologie et d’histoire ancienne offerts à Alexandru Suceveanu*, eds. Mircea Victor Angelescu et al. (Cluj-Napoca: Mega Éditions, 2010), pp. 145–153.

47 Tanner, *Decrees*, p. 93.

48 Tanner, *Decrees*, p. 93.

This civil administrative reform within Moesia Secunda province certainly took place between 518, when the see of Odessos is attested as an ordinary bishopric, and 544, when it is doubtlessly attested as a great metropolis. In this chronological interval, the only known administrative reform that directly affected Moesia Secunda, was the creation of *quaestura exercitus Iustiniani*, in 536.⁴⁹ As already shown, this administrative unit included five provinces of the empire (Moesia Secunda, Scythia, Caria, Cyprus, and Cyclades Islands) and had the capital city exactly at Odessos. This must have been the moment when Odessos became the new administrative metropolis of Moesia Secunda and its see became the new great metropolis of the province.⁵⁰

This dating also confirms Martin of Odessos' rank of metropolitan in 538. There is a rank that either himself, or possibly one of his predecessors, had obtained in May 536. In this case, it seems very probable for Martin to have represented the interests of all the bishoprics on the territory of Moesia Secunda, and not only those related to his see, in front of Emperor Justinian I.

Several other topics that must be clarified concern the chronological relation between the transfer of the see of Odessos from the ecclesiastical province of Scythia to Moesia Secunda, the raising of the see of Odessos to the rank of a great metropolis of Moesia Secunda, and the foundation of the suffragan bishoprics in the cities of the Roman Scythia. More specifically, was the see of Odessos transferred to the ecclesiastical province of Moesia Secunda some time before its raising to the rank of great metropolis, or were the two events contemporary? Then, did the foundation of the suffragan bishoprics of Tomi in Roman Scythia take place before, after, or at the same time as the transfer of the see of Odessos to Moesia Secunda?

Certain information that can contribute to understanding these issues may be taken from the rubrics on the metropoleis of Marcianopolis and Tomi in *Notitiae episcopatumum*. For each of *Notitiae* 1–4 appears a rubric dedicated to the metropolis of Marcianopolis. They are altered copies after a protograph written at the time of Patriarch Epiphanius of Constantinople (520–535).⁵¹

49 See above, 'Introduction.'

50 The raising of the see of Odessos to the rank of great metropolis of the province of Moesia Secunda is also accepted by Dominic Moreau, Radu Petcu, Ivan Gargano ["Christianisme et organisation ecclésiastique dans le bas Danube," *Dossiers d'archéologie* 40 (2021), p. 72 (as a possibility)], and Alexander Minchev ("Marcianopolis," p. 276).

51 See Ionuț Holubeanu, "Interpreting *Notitiae Episcopatumum*," in *4th International Multi-disciplinary Scientific Conferences on Social Sciences and Arts SGE M 2017. Conference Proceedings*, 2/11, eds. Aleksander Bursche et al. (Sofia: STEF92, 2017), pp. 279–284; Holubeanu, *Organizarea*, pp. 144–172.

Of interest in their case is the fact that Odessos is never mentioned among the suffragan sees of the metropolis of Marcianopolis. This absence sustains the hypothesis that the bishopric of Odessos was not part of the ecclesiastical province of Moesia Secunda when the protograph was written. If the see of Odessos had been a simple bishopric within this province for a while, before being raised to the rank of a great metropolis, it would have been listed among the suffragan bishoprics of the Marcianopolis metropolis.

One of the weak points of this deduction is that a precise dating of the rubric on Marcianopolis metropolis in *Notitiae* 1–4 is not possible. It is obvious that this rubric refers to a period prior to the moment when Odessos reached the rank of a great metropolis (year 536), but it does not exclude the possibility of another short period (unrecorded in any of the *Notitiae*) to have existed between these two historical phases, when Odessos was one of the suffragan bishoprics of the metropolitan see of Marcianopolis. Moreover, even if the succession of the two historical phases were direct, one must consider also the possibility for the name of the see of Odessos to have been recorded in the protograph that served as a source to the writing of the preserved versions of the rubric on the metropolis of Marcianopolis in *Notitiae* 1–4, but to have been eliminated due to some compiler/copyist's error. As a matter of fact, it is certain that none of the versions of the rubric on Marcianopolis metropolis in *Notitiae* 1–4 is complete. The sees of Nicopolis ad Istrum and Abritus are missing from all of them.⁵²

In what concerns the rubric dedicated to the metropolis of Tomi, it appears only in *Notitia* 3. It mentions the names of 14 suffragan bishoprics, all situated in Roman Scythia, but not of Odessos. This absence may be regarded as an indication of the fact that Odessos was no longer part of ecclesiastical Scythia when the respective structure was constituted.

In this case, as well, there are the same doubts as in that of the rubric dedicated to the metropolis of Marcianopolis. To be more precise, there may have existed a historical phase, previous to the one registered in *Notitia* 3, when Odessos had been part of ecclesiastical Scythia, together with the new bishoprics founded on the territory of Roman Scythia. On the other hand, the rubric dedicated to the metropolis of Tomi in *Notitia* 3 is not complete; two episcopal sees are missing from it [Troesmis (now Turcoaia-Iglița, Romania) and Akres/T(i)rissa (Kaliakra Cape, Bulgaria)].⁵³ Therefore, one must take into

52 Holubeanu, *Organizarea*, pp. 149–150.

53 See above, subchapter 3.3: 'The first ordinary bishoprics in the Roman province of Scythia.'

account the possibility that Odessos may have been part of the protograph that served as a source for the writing of this rubric, but its name was eliminated from its content due to a compiler/copyist's error.

Concerning the omissions of the old *Notitiae episcopatum*, it is to be mentioned that Odessos, Chersonesus, and Bosporus are never registered as ordinary bishoprics. Odessos appears either as an autocephalous archbishopric, or as a great metropolis, while Chersonesus and Bosporus always appear as autocephalous archbishoprics.⁵⁴ This aspect can only be the result of a compiler's omission. Before 536, it is certain that both the see of Odessos and that of Bosporus and, most probably, that of Chersonesus, were ordinary bishoprics. In these conditions, it becomes evident that in the protograph of the time of Patriarch Epiphanius (†535), composed before 536 and one of the sources used for the writing of *Notitiae* 1–4, the sees of Odessos, Bosporus, and, possibly, Chersonesus were mentioned as suffragan bishoprics.

An important indication for the current analysis is the moment when the see of Bosporus achieved the rank of titular metropolis.⁵⁵ The event took place between 2 and 6 May 536. *Quaestura exercitus Iustiniani* was created in the same year and, possibly, the same month. In this case, the raising of the see of Odessos to the rank of a great metropolis, and of that of Bosporus to the rank of a titular metropolis, were contemporary. As both sees had been suffragan bishoprics of Tomi for a long time, the fact that the two events were contemporary does not seem to be a coincidence. In May 536, the reorganization of the old ecclesiastical province of Scythia most probably took place. On that occasion, the see of Odessos would have been transferred to Moesia Secunda and raised to the rank of great metropolis of this province, whereas that of Bosporus and, probably, that of Chersonesus would have been raised to the rank of titular metropolis. It is also at that time that the new suffragan bishoprics of Tomi could be organized in the cities on the territory of Roman Scythia.

54 Odessos as an autocephalous archbishopric: Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum* 1.39, p. 205; 2.42, p. 217; 4.40, p. 250; 5.44, p. 265. Odessos as a great metropolis: Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum* 3.603, p. 241. Chersonesus and Bosporus as autocephalous archbishoprics: Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum* 1.62–63, p. 206; 2.66–67, p. 218; 3.82–83, p. 232; 4.63–64, p. 250; 5.67–68, p. 266.

55 On the evolution of the rank of the see of Bosporus, see below, subchapter 6.5: 'The see of Bosporus.'

5.8 Conclusions

The rank of the see of Odessos evolved along the 4th–7th centuries as follows:

1. Between 381 and 536, suffragan bishopric in the ecclesiastical province of Scythia;
2. May 536, transferred to the ecclesiastical province of Moesia Secunda and raised to the rank of great metropolis of this province;
3. *Post* 612 (?), demoted to the rank of autocephalous archbishopric.

The Ecclesiastical Province of Scythia and Church Organization on the Eastern and Northern Black Sea Coastlines (4th–6th Centuries AD)

Several episcopal sees functioned on the eastern and northern coastlines of the Black Sea between the 4th and 6th centuries AD. Most of them had their residence in cities under the rule or the influence of the Roman Empire. This chapter presents an evaluation of the canonical dependence of these bishoprics in order to understand fully the jurisdiction of the ecclesiastical province of Scythia. As demonstrated, this is not at all an easy task, given the lack of clear historical data. Therefore, some of the interpretations proposed remain in the realm of research hypotheses.

Many Greek colonies were founded in Antiquity (6th–5th centuries BC) on the Caucasian coast of the Black Sea. Roman troops were encamped in some of these areas in the second half of the 1st century and the beginning of the 2nd century AD, with the expansion of the Roman domination in the region. These troops withdrew in the second half of the 3rd century, as the Goths began invading. Only after overcoming the crisis, the empire regained control over the maritime cities in the region. The moment of the resettlement of the Roman troops in the area is not known. Certain scholars consider that the event happened during the reign of Emperor Diocletian (284–305), whereas others state that it took place in the last third of the 4th century, at the time of Valens (364–378) and Theodosius I (379–395).¹ In *Notitia Dignitatum Orientis*, a document written or updated for the last time during the reign of Theodosius II (408–450), there are three Roman military bases registered on the Caucasian coast of the Black Sea: at Pityus (now Pitsunda/Mzakhara/Bichvinta, Abkhazia-Georgia), Sebastopolis (former Dioscurias, now Sukhumi/Aqwa, Abkhazia-Georgia), and Ziganis/Ziganne (now Gudava, Abkhazia-Georgia).² Those at Pityus and Sebastopolis were preserved by the empire until the reign

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- 1 For scholarly opinions on the issue of the return of the Roman control over these cities, see Ljudmila G. Khrushkova, “The Spread of Christianity in the Eastern Black Sea Littoral (Written and Archaeological Sources),” *Ancient West & East* 6 (2007), pp. 184–186.
 - 2 *Notitia Dignitatum* xxxviii, ed. Otto Seeck (Berlin: Weidmannos, 1876), pp. 84–85. On *Notitia Dignitatum*, see Alexander P. Kazhdan, “Notitia Dignitatum,” in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, 3, eds. Alexander P. Kazhdan et al. (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 1496.

of Justinian I (527–565), while the military base of Ziganis was abandoned shortly after the writing/updating of *Notitia Dignitatum*.³

Six episcopal sees are known on the eastern coast of the Black Sea, namely (from north to south): Nicopsis (now Nechepsukho, Krasnodar Krai, Russia), Pityus, Sebastopolis, Ziganis, Phasis (now Poti, Georgia), and Petra (now Tsikhisdziri, Georgia). During the 4th–6th centuries, Nicopsis was part of Zechia Kingdom, whereas Pityus and Sebastopolis were under the rule of the Roman Empire. Ziganis, Phasis, and Petra were under the direct control of the Roman Empire during the 4th century, later being ceded to the Kingdom of Lazica. The Kingdom of Lazica was dissolved in the first part of the reign of Justinian I, its territory being annexed to the Roman Empire. The Kingdom of Abasgia, situated to the north of Lazica, also with access to the Black Sea, became a Roman possession at the same period. A new episcopal centre was created in Abasgia, Christianized shortly after, at Justinian I's initiative. The remains of its residence were identified at Tsandriph (now Gantiadi, Abkhazia-Georgia) (see Maps 6 and 7).⁴

6.1 The Bishoprics of Pityus and Sebastopolis

Pityus was the headquarters of the farthest Roman military base on the Caucasian coast of the Black Sea. The city had been attested as an episcopal centre since the year 325. In the preserved versions of the signatories' list from the First Council of Nicaea (325), at the end of the rubric dedicated to the province of Pontus Polemoniacus, there is also the signature of Stratophilus

3 Constantine Zuckerman, "The Early Byzantine Strongholds in Eastern Pontus," in *Travaux et Mémoires*, 11, eds. Gilbert Dagron and Denis Feissel (Paris: De Boccard, 1991), pp. 527–540; Ljudmila G. Khrushkova, *Les monuments chrétiens de la côte orientale de la Mer Noire. Abkhazie, IV^e–XIV^e siècles*, (Bibliothèque de l'antiquité tardive) 9 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), pp. 17–20; Alexandru Madgearu, "Expansiunea și decăderea puterii romane în bazinul Mării Negre" [The Expansion and Decline of the Roman Power in the Black Sea Basin], in *Marea Neagră. State și frontieră, de la sfârșitul Antichității la Pacea de la Paris (1856)*, eds. Sergiu Iosipescu, Alexandru Madgearu, and Mircea Soreanu (Bucharest: Editura Militară, 2013), pp. 46, 48, and 62–64.

4 V.A. Lekvinadze, "O postroïkakh ĭustiniana v Zapadnoi Gruzii" [On Justinian's Buildings in Western Georgia], *Vizantiiskii vremennik/Byzantine Annals* 34 (1973), p. 185; Khrushkova, *Les monuments chrétiens*, pp. 23, 45, and 53; Khrushkova, "The Spread of Christianity," pp. 190, 204, and 206; Andrei Ū. Vinogradov, "Some Notes on the Topography of Eastern Pontus Euxeinus in Late Antiquity and Early Byzantium," *Higher School of Economics Research Paper* No. WP BRP 82/HUM/2014, p. 6. Available at https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2543458. Accessed 2015 June 20.

of Pityus (‘Στρατόφιλος Πιτυούντων’).⁵ This information certifies the existence of episcopal structures on the Caucasian coast of the Black Sea during the reign of Constantine I (306–337), and shows that, at that time, at least one of the episcopal centres (Pityus) was a suffragan bishopric of the metropolis of Neocaesarea, within the ecclesiastical province of Pontus Polemoniacus.⁶

There is no other information preserved about the see of Pityus. The name of the bishop of Pityus is absent from *Encyclia* (457–458) and this episcopal see is not mentioned in *Notitiae episcopatum*. Nevertheless, the existence of this bishopric during the 4th–6th centuries (at least until the year 542) is sustained by the results of archaeological research. The remains of several Christian basilicas were identified at Pityus.⁷ The building of the oldest of them (no. 1), situated outside the city’s enclosure wall, dates between the years 313 and 325. In the first half of the 5th century, a new, larger basilica (no. 2), also extramural, was built on its place. A baptistery with piscina was located in the southern part of its narthex. In the second half of the 5th century, basilica 2 was replaced by another one (no. 3), included in the protected area by extending the enclosure wall of the city. In the 5th century, a small religious complex composed of two places of worship (a martyrion and a chapel) was built outside the protected area.

The information provided by Procopius of Caesarea and Emperor Justinian I is of utmost importance to establish the rank of this episcopal see and its canonical dependence. The Byzantine historian specifies the fact that the Roman military base of Pityus functioned continuously from the moment of its creation until the reign of Justinian I.⁸ The historical phase described by Procopius most probably began during the reign of Diocletian. The direct control of the empire over this settlement at that time is attested by Christian martyrs that were exiled there during the great persecution at the beginning of the 4th century.⁹ The Roman rule at Pityus is also attested a century later,

5 Heinrich Gelzer, Heinrich Hilgenfeld, and Otto Cuntz, *Patrum nicaenorum nomina Latinae, Graece, Coptice Syriace, Arabice, Armeniace* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1898), pp. LXII, 29–31, 65, 89, 107, 129–131, and 201.

6 See also Khrushkova, “The Spread of Christianity,” p. 188; Vinogradov, “Some Notes,” p. 9.

7 For the basilicas discovered at Pityus, see Khrushkova, *Les monuments chrétiens*, pp. 29–38; Khrushkova, “The Spread of Christianity,” pp. 193–196.

8 Procopius Caesariensis, *De bellis* VIII.4.3–5, in Procopius Caesariensis, *Opera omnia*, 2, eds. Jakob Haury and Gerhard Wirth (Munich/Leipzig: Saur, 2001), pp. 500¹⁷–501²; Procopius of Caesarea, *History of the Wars* VIII.4.3–5, in Procopius, *On Buildings, History of the Wars, and Secret History*, 5, trans. Henry Bronson Dewing (London: William Heinemann; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972), p. 83.

9 There are two groups of Christians, the first formed of seven Roman soldiers (led by Orentius), and the second of five (Eugenius, Valerian/Valerius, Candidus/Canidios, and

in 406. The city was chosen as a place of exile for John Chrysostom in that year. Theodoret of Cyrrhus, referring to this event, described Pityus as “τέρμα δὲ τοῦτο καὶ τοῦ Πόντου καὶ τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἡγεμονίας, τοῖς ὠμοτάτοις γειτονεῦον βαρβάρους” (“a place at the extremity of the Euxine and on the marches of the Roman Empire, in the near neighbourhood of the wildest savages”).¹⁰ In *Notitia Dignitatum*, written/updated during the reign of Theodosius II, Pityus appears as headquarters of *ala prima felix Theodosiana*.¹¹ In 488, Pityus was chosen as a place of exile for Peter the Fuller of Antioch (471–488).¹² In the second quarter of the 6th century, Justinian I himself asserts that the city of Pityus was part of the Roman Empire. By *Novella* 28 (16 July 535), he established the union of the Helenopontus and Pontus Polemoniacus provinces into a new administrative unit, also called Helenopontus. In the introductory part of the document, he emphasized the fact that Pityus and Sebastopolis must not be considered ‘cities’ (*civitates/πόλεις*), but ‘forts’ (*castra/φρούρια*).¹³ The same paragraph shows that Pityus and Sebastopolis, even if situated in two enclaves placed at the north-eastern extremity of the Black Sea, separated from the rest of the empire by the Kingdom of Lazica, were part of Pontus Polemoniacus province (see the Maps 6 and 7).¹⁴ Pityus was completely destroyed by the Roman soldiers who protected it during the Roman-Persian war, in order to prevent its occupation by the Persians, in the year 542.¹⁵ The locale was subsequently rebuilt.

Aquila/Akylor), exiled at Pityus around the year 300 (Khrushkova, *Les monuments chrétiens*, p. 24; Khrushkova, “The Spread of Christianity,” p. 188).

- 10 Theodoretus Cyrensis, *Historia ecclesiastica* v.34.8, in *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Léon Parmentier, (Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller) 19 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1911), pp. 335^{19–21}–336¹; Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *The Ecclesiastical History*, trans. and notes Blomfield Jackson, (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers) 11/3 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1969), p. 357.
- 11 *Notitia Dignitatum* xxxviii, p. 84.
- 12 Khrushkova, *Les monuments chrétiens*, p. 25; Khrushkova, “The Spread of Christianity,” p. 189.
- 13 *Corpus Iuris Civilis* (hereafter cited as *CIC*), 3, ed. Rudolf Schöll (Berlin: Weidmannos, 1912), p. 212^{19–32}; *The Novels of Justinian*, trans. Samuel P. Scott (Cincinnati, 1932). Available at https://droitromain.univ-grenoble-alpes.fr/Anglica/Novellae_Scott.htm. Accessed 2022 June 1.
- 14 This point of view is sustained also by Constantine Zuckerman (“The Early Byzantine,” p. 537) and Lūdмила Khrushkova (*Les monuments chrétiens*, p. 20; “The Spread of Christianity,” p. 187).
- 15 Procopius Caesariensis, *De bellis* viii.4.6, p. 501^{6–13}; trans., p. 83; Procopius Caesariensis, *De Aedificiis* iii.7.8, in Procopius Caesariensis, *Opera omnia*, 4, eds. Jakob Haury and Gerhard Wirth (München/Leipzig: Saur, 2001), p. 100^{13–18}; Procopius of Caesarea, *On Buildings* iii.7.8, in Procopius, *On Buildings, History of the Wars, and Secret History*, 7,

The fact that the city of Pityus was part of Pontus Polemoniacus in 535 indicates that its bishopric continued to be associated with the homonymous ecclesiastical province, as in the year 325. This must have been the situation over the whole interval between 325 and 542. On the one hand, the permanent presence of the Roman troops there suggests that the situation of the fortress remained unchanged from the point of view of both civil and ecclesiastical organizations. On the other hand, the status of 'fort,' emphasized by the emperor in *Novella* 28, proves that the see of Pityus had the rank of ordinary bishopric, and not that of titular metropolis (autocephalous archbishopric). The provisions of canon 12 from the Council of Chalcedon (451) are clarifying in this respect. According to them, a bishopric achieved the rank of titular metropolis only if its city of residence was granted the status of metropolis.¹⁶

Novella 28 also stipulated that the old church organization on the territory of the newly created province of Helenopontus should remain unchanged.¹⁷ This means that there were two ecclesiastical provinces (Helenopontus and Pontus Polemoniacus) on its territory. Their existence was reinforced also in the following year, by *Novella* 31 (18 March 536), when the cities of Trapezus and Cerasus were distributed to the newly created civil province of Armenia Prima, whereas the city of Comana was associated with the newly created Armenia Secunda. This time, as well, the emperor imposed that the church organization in the region must not be affected in any way by the changes that unfolded within the civil organizational plan.¹⁸ In these conditions, the old ecclesiastical province of Pontus Polemoniacus continued its existence, with Pityus and Sebastopolis as suffragan bishoprics of the metropolitan see of Neocaesarea.

This analysis leads to the conclusion that an episcopal centre functioned at Pityus, in the north-eastern extremity of the Black Sea. The moment of its foundation is not known. It was first attested through documents in the year 325, during the First Council of Nicaea (325). This episcopal see continuously functioned at least until the year 542. It permanently had the rank of ordinary bishopric, suffragan of the metropolitan see of Neocaesarea in the ecclesiastical province of Pontus Polemoniacus.

Sebastopolis, a city first named Dioscurias and, according to certain historians, also Valentia for a while, was a Greek colony founded around the middle

trans. Henry Bronson Dewing (London: William Heinemann; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 215.

16 Norman P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1 (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990), p. 93.

17 *CIC*, 3, pp. 213³¹–214⁶; trans. Scott.

18 *CIC*, 3, p. 238^{17–25}; trans. Scott.

of the 6th century BC.¹⁹ It had the rank of *'civitas/πόλις'* ('city') during the reign of Hadrian (117–138).²⁰ Sebastopolis became the headquarters of a Roman military base by the turn of the 2nd century AD. The empire abandoned the settlement after the Goths' attack in the year 254.²¹ According to the testimony of Procopius of Caesarea, after their return to Sebastopolis, the Romans maintained control over the fortress until the reign of Justinian I.²² The information provided by *Novella* 28 (16 July 535) reveals that the settlement had the status of 'fort' (*'castrum/φρούριον'*) and was part of Pontus Polemoniacus province.²³ Sebastopolis was totally destroyed by the Roman soldiers who defended it, in order to prevent its occupation by the Persians in the year 542, at the beginning of the Roman-Persian war.²⁴ Later, also during the reign of Justinian I, the settlement was rebuilt as a 'city' (*'civitas/πόλις'*).²⁵ The building of the new Sebastopolis took place between 557 and 562. The first year represents the moment of the armistice between the Romans and the Persians in the war for Lazica.²⁶ The second (562) is *terminus ante quem* of the writing by Procopius of *De Aedificiis*, which mentions the rebuilding of the settlement.²⁷

In the old *Notitiae episcopatum*, the see of Sebastopolis is attested as an autocephalous archbishopric within the ecclesiastical province of Abasgia.²⁸ This information reflects a historical phase after the moment of rebuilding of the city (557–562), as the settlement had the status of fort until the moment of its destruction (542). For this reason, in agreement with the provisions of canon 12 of Chalcedon, its bishopric could not have had the rank of an autocephalous archbishopric. However, there is no information referring to the see of Sebastopolis prior to the year 542. It remains to be established whether Sebastopolis was an episcopal centre before this date. At present, the only

19 As Valentia: Zuckerman, "The Early Byzantine," p. 534.

20 Arnold Hugh Martin Jones, *Cities of the Eastern Roman Provinces*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 172.

21 Madgearu, "Expansiunea și decăderea," pp. 62–63.

22 Procopius Caesariensis, *De bellis* VIII.4.3–5, pp. 500¹⁷–501²; trans., p. 83.

23 *CIC*, 3, p. 212^{19–32}; trans. Scott.

24 Procopius Caesariensis, *De bellis* VIII.4.6, p. 501^{6–13}; trans., p. 83; Procopius Caesariensis, *De Aedificiis* III.7.8, p. 100^{13–18}; trans., p. 215.

25 Procopius Caesariensis, *De Aedificiis* III.7.9, p. 100^{18–23}; trans., p. 215.

26 Madgearu, "Expansiunea și decăderea," p. 65.

27 James Allen Stewart Evans, "The Date of Procopius' Works: A Recapitulation of the Evidence," *Greek, Roman and Byzantine Studies* 37 (1996), p. 313.

28 Jean Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae. Texte critique, introduction et notes*, (Géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire Byzantin) 1 (Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 1981), 1.72, p. 206; 2.76, p. 218; 3.94, p. 233; 4.74, p. 251; 5.77, p. 266.

data to be considered is the archaeological evidence. The most imposing and complex Christian religious ensemble on the eastern coast of the Black Sea was discovered at Sebastopolis. It was situated in the intramural area of the settlement. The architectural ensemble included an octagonal place of worship, with four annexes added, in the shape of a cross. The southern annex had another hall attached, which was meant to function as a martyrium. It continued eastward with a basilica with three naves and a polygonal apse at the eastern end, provided with synthronon. In the central area of the octagonal edifice there was an exedra, with the arched side to the east. On its northern side the remains of the synthronon were identified. The communion table (*mensa sacra*) was likely in the centre of the exedra. The building of the whole religious complex was dated to the first half of the 5th century. It was destroyed by fire in 542.²⁹

The existence of this vast religious complex may be regarded as proof of the presence of a bishop in Sebastopolis at that time (the beginning of the 5th century). It is not excluded, however, for the episcopal see of Sebastopolis to have been organized from the 4th century onward. Nevertheless, it is difficult to establish the exact moment of its foundation, without additional data. A possible indication of this bishopric's age could be that, at the First Council of Nicaea, Bishop Stratophilus represented only the Church of Pityus, not also that of Sebastopolis. The fact that the latter one was not mentioned in his signature [Στρατόφιλος Πιτυούντων (Stratophilus of Pityus)] indicates that Stratophilus' jurisdiction covered only the enclave of Pityus. In this case, the possibility for Sebastopolis, city situated at c.60 km southward of Pityus and other c.60 km northward of Ziganis (see the Maps 6 and 7), to have had its own bishop from that very date remains open to discussion. Even if this hypothesis were rejected, however, the existence of an episcopal see at Sebastopolis at the end of the 4th century, after the promulgation of Christianity as the official religion of the empire by Emperor Theodosius I, may be appreciated as very probable.

Concerning the rank and the canonical dependence of this episcopal see, they must have been similar to those of the bishopric of Pityus, until 542/557: an ordinary bishopric, suffragan of the metropolitan see of Neocaesarea in the province of Pontus Polemoniacus. The proof is the similar evolution of the two

29 Khrushkova, *Les monuments chrétiens*, pp. 58–70; Khrushkova, “The Spread of Christianity,” pp. 197–200; Lūdmila G. Khrushkova, “Early Christian Monuments of the North-East Black Sea Coast: Excavations of 2001–2008,” in *Acta xv Congressus internationalis archaeologiae christianae. Toleti (8–12.9.2008)*. *Episcopus, civitas, territorium*, 2, eds. Olof Brandt et al., (Studi di Antichità Cristiana) 65 (Vatican: Pontificio Istituto di Archeologia cristiana, 2013), pp. 1213–1216.

fortresses from the point of view of civic organization. On the one hand, the fact that Emperor Justinian I designated Sebastopolis as 'fort' is a clear argument in favour of the rank of simple bishopric held by this see prior to 542/557. On the other hand, the fact that Sebastopolis was part of Pontus Polemoniacus province, within the secular organization plan, stated by the same emperor, as well as the permanent presence there of the Roman troops, sustained by Procopius of Caesarea and confirmed by archaeological discoveries, indicate that the status of ordinary bishopric of the see of Sebastopolis was maintained within the ecclesiastical province of Pontus Polemoniacus from the moment of its foundation until the middle of the 6th century.

As a conclusion, Sebastopolis was another episcopal centre on the eastern coast of the Black Sea. The moment of its foundation is not known. It may have been organized at the beginning of the 4th century. Its existence toward the end of this century is very probable. The rank of this episcopal see, from the moment of its foundation until 542/557, was that of ordinary bishopric, suffragan of the metropolitan see of Neocaesarea in the ecclesiastical province of Pontus Polemoniacus.

Two issues related to the bishoprics of Pityus and Sebastopolis are briefly evaluated at the end of this subchapter. The first one concerns their hierarchs not mentioned in *Encyclia*, although both sees certainly existed and were part of Pontus Polemoniacus at that time (457–458). The names and signatures of four hierarchs appear within the letter of response addressed to Emperor Leo I from this province: the Metropolitan Euippus of Neocaesarea and the Bishops Peter of Comana, John of Polemonium, and Gratidianus of Cerasus. The name of the bishop of Trapezus is also missing.³⁰

The absence of the last-mentioned individual may be explained by the fact that the see of Trapezus was vacant at that time or its bishop could not respond to the invitation to participate in the provincial synod. In what concerns the absence of the hierarchs of Pityus and Sebastopolis, this can be explained by the fact that they either could not be convoked, or could not come to the extraordinary session of the provincial synod because of wintertime and the haste in which the investigation was carried out. This situation is similar to the one evident in the Islands and, most probably, to that of ecclesiastical Scythia.³¹ Moreover, by their geographical position, Pityus and Sebastopolis were like islands, isolated from the rest of the empire at wintertime (see the Maps 6 and 7).

30 See *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum* (hereafter cited as *ACO*), II/5, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1936), pp. 79²⁰–84¹¹.

31 See above, subchapter 2.2.2: 'The *Encyclia* (457–458) of emperor Leo I.'

The second issue concerns the fact that the two sees were not mentioned in the old *Notitiae episcopatum* (nos. 1–4) as ordinary bishoprics in Pontus Polemoniaca. As already shown, Pityus is not mentioned in any *Notitiae* and Sebastopolis always appears as an autocephalous archbishopric in the ecclesiastical province of Abasgia. The analysis of the information on Moesia Secunda preserved in these *Notitiae* led to the conclusion that a list (possibly the oldest) of the ecclesiastical sees within the patriarchate of Constantinople was written during the time of Epiphanius of Constantinople (520–535).³² Information from its content was reproduced in *Notitiae* 1–5. In the protograph of the list of Epiphanius, Pityus and Sebastopolis must have been registered as ordinary bishoprics in Pontus Polemoniaca, as this was their situation at that time (*ante* 535). In this case, the fact that they were not mentioned in any of the *Notitiae* 1–4 as ordinary bishoprics could have two explanations: either their names were eliminated/omitted from the content of the rubrics of Pontus Polemoniaca by those who compiled/copied *Notitiae* 1–4, or the rubrics of Pontus Polemoniaca presented a historical phase (certainly subsequent to the year 542) when the two bishoprics were no longer suffragan of the metropolitan see of Neocaesarea. The second hypothesis is sustained by the fact that, in *Notitiae* 1–5, the see of Sebastopolis is registered with the rank of an autocephalous archbishopric in Abasgia. In this case, the compilers of *Notitiae* 1–4 overlooked the information regarding Pontus Polemoniaca shown in the protograph of Epiphanius of Constantinople, which they had at their disposal.

6.2 The Bishoprics of Ziganis, Phasis, and Petra

Unlike Pityus and Sebastopolis, situated on the Black Sea coast next to the Kingdoms of Abasgia and Apsilia, respectively, the cities of Ziganis, Phasis, and Petra were situated on the territory of the Kingdom of Lazica. Hence, the evolution of their episcopal sees depended on the political, military, and religious situation in Lazica and on the relations extending between this kingdom and the Roman Empire.

In 130–131, in *Periplus of the Euxine Sea*, Arrian of Nicomedia characterized the king of the Laz people as an ordinary tribal leader, whose power was guaranteed by the emperor of Rome. From that moment until the end of the 4th century, there had been no other information referring to the evolution

32 See Ionuț Holubeanu, *Organizarea bisericească în Scythia și Moesia Secunda în secolele IV–VII* [The Ecclesiastical Organization in Scythia and Moesia Secunda in the 4th–7th Centuries] (Bucharest: Basilica, 2018), pp. 144–172.

of the kingdom. Lazica, however, appears on a considerably consolidated position in the region throughout the 5th and 6th centuries. Its king received the royal insignia from Constantinople and, in his turn, granted such insignia to kings of smaller kingdoms in the Caucasian area (from Suania, Scymnia, Apsilia, Abasgia), that were under the influence of the Roman Empire. The extant documents show that the origins of this privilege date to the reign of Emperor Theodosius. It is not clear, however, if the emperor referred to was Theodosius I (379–395) or Theodosius II (408–450). Another privilege granted by the Roman Empire to the people of Lazica was that of having their own army to defend their territory. It seems that, due to this right, that was particularly appreciated by the Lazi, the Roman troops were withdrawn from the entire Lazica area.³³

If the granting of the two privileges took place at the same time, then the Roman emperor in whose time these vassalage relations were established must have been Theodosius II. An indication in this respect is the registration of Ziganis city as a base of *cohors secunda Valentiana* in *Notitia Dignitatum*.³⁴ This proves that Ziganis was still under direct control of the Romans at the beginning of the 5th century. The Roman troops there were supposed to have been withdrawn during the reign of Theodosius II, shortly after the writing/updating of *Notitia Dignitatum*.³⁵ This withdrawal may have been determined precisely by the privilege granted by the Romans to the Lazi to defend their territory by themselves. Moreover, according to the testimony of Procopius, the Roman troops were withdrawn from all of the other port settlements on the Caucasian coast, except for the fortresses of Sebastopolis and Pityus.³⁶

The preserved information is not very clear in what concerns the first traces of Christianity in Lazica. The *Ecclesiastical History* of pseudo-Gelasius of Cyzicus specifies that the Lazi and the Iberians were Christianized during the reign of Constantine I.³⁷ Nevertheless, scholars regard this information with reserve. Only that Lazica had already been perceived as a highly Christian country when this book was written (c.475) is admitted.³⁸

33 Zuckerman, "The Early Byzantine," pp. 536–537 and 540–542.

34 *Notitia Dignitatum* XXXVIII, p. 85.

35 Zuckerman, "The Early Byzantine," p. 35.

36 Procopius Caesariensis, *De bellis* VIII.4.3–5, pp. 500¹⁷–501²; trans., p. 83.

37 Gelasius Cyzicenus, *Historia ecclesiastica* III.10.1, in *Anonyme Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Christian Hansen Günther, (Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten Jahrhunderte, N.F.) 9 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2002), p. 123^{33–35}.

38 For the first Christian traces and the spread of Christianity in Lazica, see Khrushkova, *Les monuments chrétiens*, pp. 22–23; Khrushkova, "The Spread of Christianity," pp. 189–190; Vinogradov, "Some Notes," pp. 8–9.

However, even if the veracity of the tradition recorded by pseudo-Gelasius is contested, its circulation in the second half of the 5th century proves the early spread of Christianity in Lazica. It reveals that the history of the Laz people's conversion was no longer recent in 475. Therefore, it was not an event that had taken place shortly before, but rather distant in time. The generation of pseudo-Gelasius had certainly not been contemporary with it. Consequently, the Christian faith must have spread to Lazica at the beginning of the 5th century, at the latest. This would mean that, when the new vassalage relations were established between the Roman Empire and the Kingdom of Lazica, during the reign of Theodosius II, Christianity was, if not generalized, at least largely spread among the inhabitants of this kingdom.

Procopius appreciated that "the Lazi are Christians of the most thoroughgoing kind" and referred to "the bishops of the Lazi."³⁹ About these, he noted that they ordained priests also for a Christian population living on the Black Sea coast, between the Roman Empire and their kingdom. This information reveals that there was a well-organized episcopal network in Lazica at that time, whose hierarchs also served the religious needs of other Christian people in the region.

The early spread of Christianity in Lazica is also confirmed by archaeological discoveries. The remains of a large basilica (26 m long) were uncovered at Archaeopolis (now Nokalakevi/Tsikhgedzhi, Georgia), the capital city of Lazica, and dated to the 4th century. The edifice was destroyed in the middle of the 5th century and a new basilica was built on its ruins, provided with a baptistery with a piscina. In its turn, this edifice was destroyed by fire at the beginning of the 6th century.⁴⁰ Along with this, the remains of other smaller basilicas were discovered in the city and its neighbourhood, dated to the 5th and 6th centuries.⁴¹ The building of these places of worship proves the existence of an important Christian community in the capital city of the kingdom back from the 4th century, as well as that of a bishop, in the middle of the 5th century, at the latest. Moreover, these archaeological discoveries were

39 Procopius Caesariensis, *De bellis* II.28.26, in Procopius Caesariensis, *Opera omnia*, 1, eds. Jakob Haury and Gerhard Wirth (Munich/Leipzig: Saur, 2001), p. 286¹⁰⁻¹¹: "ἐπὶ Λαζοὶ μὲν Χριστιανοὶ εἰσι πάντων μάλιστα;" Procopius of Caesarea, *History of the Wars* II.28.26, in Procopius, *On Buildings, History of the Wars, and Secret History*, 1, trans. Henry Bronson Dewing (London: William Heinemann; New York: The Macmillan co., 1914), p. 523. Procopius Caesariensis, *De bellis* VIII.2.17, p. 493¹²⁻¹⁵: "οἱ Λαζῶν ἐπίσκοποι;" trans., p. 69.

40 Khrushkova, "The Spread of Christianity," pp. 197 and 209.

41 Khrushkova, "The Spread of Christianity," p. 209.

seen by certain scholars as a strong argument in favour of the Laz people's Christianization as early as the 4th or the 5th century, at the latest.⁴²

To conclude, established Christian communities have been attested in Lazica from the 4th century onward. The Christian faith seems to have been largely spread within the local population in the first half of the 5th century, when new relations of vassalage were established between the Roman Empire and the kingdom (during the reign of Theodosius II).

In what concerns the episcopal network on the territory of Lazica, an approximate image appears in *Notitiae episcopatum*. In three of the oldest *Notitiae* (1, 2, and 4), five episcopal sees are registered in the rubric for the ecclesiastical province of Lazica: Phasis (as a great metropolis), Rodopolis/Rhodopolis (now Vardtsikhe, Georgia), Saisine (now Tsaishi, Georgia), Petra, and Ziganis (as suffragan bishoprics).⁴³ In *Notitia* 3, the see of Rhizaion (now Rize, Turkey) is also registered with the others, a settlement on the Black Sea coast, eastward of Trapezus (Pontus Polemoniicus) (see Map 7).⁴⁴ Archaeopolis is not mentioned in any *Notitia*. As already shown, archaeological discoveries indicate the presence of a bishop there in the middle of the 5th century, at the latest. The existence of the episcopal see there also in the middle of the 6th century is suggested by the fact that both Justinian I and Procopius designated Archaeopolis as one of the most important cities in Lazica.⁴⁵ In these conditions, the fact that it is not mentioned in *Notitiae* is either the result of a copyist's omission, or the episcopal scheme presented in these documents shows a historical phase (certainly subsequent to the reign of Justinian I) when this episcopal see no longer existed.⁴⁶

There is no written information preserved about the bishoprics of Phasis, Petra, and Ziganis during the 4th through 6th centuries. Nevertheless, the results of archaeological discoveries indicate the existence of the episcopal centres of Ziganis and Petra. The remains of an edifice from the 4th–5th centuries, believed to have been a baptistery, were identified at Ziganis.⁴⁷

42 Nodar Y. Lomouri, *Gruzino-rimskie vzaimootnosheniâ* [Georgian-Roman Relationships] (Tbilisi: Izd-vo Tbilisskogo universiteta, 1981), pp. 279–291.

43 Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum* 1.27.413–417, p. 212; 2.27.482–486, p. 227; 4.27.434–438, p. 259.

44 Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum* 3.33.576–581, p. 241.

45 *CIC*, 3, p. 213^{1–2}; trans. Scott; Procopius Caesariensis, *De bellis* II.29.18, p. 292^{11–13}; trans., p. 533; Procopius Caesariensis, *De bellis* VIII.13.3, p. 553^{8–9}; trans., p. 183.

46 Andreï Vinogradov (“Some Notes,” pp. 10–11) explains the absence of the see of Archaeopolis from *Notitiae* by the fact that these documents reflect the church organization in Lazica after the first half of the 7th century.

47 Khrushkova, “The Spread of Christianity,” p. 202.

The remains of a basilica from the time of Justinian I were discovered at Petra. Scholars agree on the possibility that it may have functioned as an episcopal cathedral.⁴⁸ Petra is also known to have been completely rebuilt by Justinian I and raised by him to the rank of a 'city' ('*civitas/πόλις*').⁴⁹ Therefore, based on Zeno's law of 474–484, it must have become an episcopal centre by that time, at the latest.⁵⁰ However, there is no documentary information attesting the existence of a bishopric there before the reign of Justinian I.

Regarding the bishopric of Phasis, its oldest documentary evidence dates to the year 631. Cyril of Phasis was transferred at that time by Emperor Heraclius (610–641) to the see of Alexandria, in Egypt.⁵¹ Before that, in the middle of the 6th century, Agathias had mentioned the existence of a famous church, place of pilgrimage, not far from the city.⁵² Nevertheless, the city of Phasis is not mentioned in *Novella* 28 (16 July 535), where Justinian I presents the situation in Lazica after annexing this kingdom.⁵³ Moreover, Procopius of Caesarea did not mention Phasis among the cities rebuilt during the reign of this emperor.⁵⁴ Furthermore, no archaeological data is available to explain the age of the see of Phasis. Despite this lack of information, the bishopric there may have been of an appreciable age and prestige. These may have been two of the reasons why it was raised to the rank of great metropolis of Lazica, as it appears in *Notitiae episcopatumum*.⁵⁵

Concerning the canonical dependence of these episcopal centres (Phasis, Ziganis, and Petra), it can only be supposed, based on the evolution of the political and military situation of their cities. The rule of the Roman Empire over Ziganis until the reign of Theodosius II suggests the integration of its bishopric, by that time, within the ecclesiastical structures of the empire. In this case, it seems probable that the see of Ziganis may have been a suffragan bishopric of the metropolis of Neocaesarea in Pontus Polemoniacus. Later, it may be supposed that the see of Ziganis was integrated into the episcopal structure of the Church in Lazica, after the Romans had ceded the city to the

48 Khrushkova, *Les monuments chrétiens*, p. 26; Khrushkova, "The Spread of Christianity," p. 191.

49 *CIC*, 3, pp. 212³⁰–213¹; trans. Scott; Procopius Caesariensis, *De bellis* II.29.20, p. 292^{23–24}; trans., p. 535; Procopius Caesariensis, *De Aedificiis* III.7.7, p. 100^{5–6}; trans., p. 215.

50 On Zeno's law, see above, subchapter 3.1: 'Justinian I's code and Zeno's law.'

51 Khrushkova, "The Spread of Christianity," p. 191.

52 Khrushkova, *Les monuments chrétiens*, pp. 23–24.

53 In *Novella* 28, Justinian I mentioned Petra, Archaeopolis, Rhodopolis, Scondis, Sarapanis, Murisius, and Lysiris in Lazica (*CIC*, 3, pp. 212³⁰–213⁵; trans. Scott).

54 See Procopius Caesariensis, *De Aedificiis* III.7.5–7, pp. 99²⁵–100¹³; trans., pp. 213 and 215.

55 The old age of the see of Phasis is accepted also by Andrei Vinogradov ("Some Notes," pp. 10–11).

Lazi, following the new vassalage relations established between the two states. It is to be mentioned that the kingdom was already a mostly Christian state at that time. The sees of Phasis and Petra may have had the same evolution.

In what concerns the canonical situation of the Church of Lazica, it may have been autonomous. An indication in this respect is the fact that no bishop of Lazica is mentioned within the list of the addressees in *Encyclia* (457–458).⁵⁶ In this case, it must have come under the jurisdiction of the patriarchate of Constantinople after the occupation of the kingdom by the Roman Empire, at the beginning of Justinian I's reign.⁵⁷

To conclude, it is not possible to date precisely the foundation of the episcopal sees of Ziganis, Phasis, and Petra. The existence of that of Ziganis by the turn of the 5th century can be affirmed based on archaeological evidence. Quite an old age (4th–5th centuries?) may be supposed for the see of Phasis, considering its regional prestige. In the case of the see of Petra, there is no clear evidence to sustain its existence before the reign of Justinian I. The episcopal centres of these settlements are supposed to have been part of the province of Pontus Polemoniacus in the period when they were under the rule of the Roman Empire. Later, after their transfer to the Kingdom of Lazica, their bishoprics were integrated into the church structures of the kingdom. This event most probably took place during the reign of Theodosius II.

6.3 The Bishoprics of Abasgia, Apsilia, and Zechia

Three other bishoprics are attested in the 6th century on the eastern coast of the Black Sea: in Apsilia, Abasgia, and Zechia. Procopius of Caesarea described Apsilia as a country that had been Christian for a long time, without mentioning when and who Christianized this people, however.⁵⁸ The only certain

⁵⁶ See *ACO*, II/5, pp. 22³²–24²⁸.

⁵⁷ Lūdmila Khrushkova sustains the dependence of the Church in Lazica on the patriarchate of Constantinople, without making any distinction between the period when Lazica was a vassal state of the Roman Empire and that when it was a Roman territory. To support her assertion, the scholar invokes the case of the bishopric of Pityus and the provisions of canon 28 of Chalcedon (see Khrushkova, “The Spread of Christianity,” p. 191). However, the situation of the bishopric of Pityus is irrelevant in this regard, as Pityus was under Roman, not Lazi rule at that time. Regarding canon 28, it was issued only in the year 451. Therefore, it does not contribute in any way to identifying the situation of the Church in the kingdom prior to this year. Furthermore, as already shown, the name of the metropolitan of Lazica does not appear within the list of the addressees in *Encyclia*, whose investigation was initiated in the autumn of 457, therefore after the issue of canon 28.

⁵⁸ Procopius Caesariensis, *De bellis* VIII.2.33, pp. 495²⁶–496¹; trans., p. 73.

conclusion resulting from his assertion is that Apsilia had been converted to Christianity long before the reign of Justinian I.⁵⁹ Christianity could have spread to Apsilia both from the Roman centre of Sebastopolis, situated on the Black Sea coast next to this kingdom, or from Lazica, situated southward. From the point of view of secular relations, Apsilia was very close to Lazica. The kings of the latter are those who granted the royal insignia to the monarchs of Apsilia, being entrusted by the emperors of Constantinople.

The remains of only one possible episcopal centre were identified on the territory of the former Apsilia. It was situated at Tsibilia/Tsibilon (now Tsebelda, Abkhazia-Georgia), the most important fortress of the kingdom (see Map 7). The fortress defended the Kodori Valley, which connected the Black Sea shore to the steppe northward of the Caucasus Mountains. The remains of the three superposed basilicas were identified inside the fortress. The oldest and, at the same time, the largest of them (no. 3) displayed only one nave, a semicircular apse toward the east, and a narthex toward the west. Three halls were added to the southern side, part of a baptistery with piscina. The southern side of the baptistery continued with a small room, which housed holy relics. The basilica was dated in the first half of the 6th century. Tiles and bricks bearing the mark of a certain Bishop Constantine were identified in other edifices of Tsibilia. His name is not mentioned in any other known document.⁶⁰

Archaeological discoveries in Tsibilia prove the existence there of an episcopal see in the first half of the 6th century. It is difficult to say if this bishopric was founded at the same time as the construction of the religious complex identified there or some time earlier. However, this is the only bishopric supposed to have existed on the territory of the small Caucasian kingdom.

There is no clear documentary reference regarding the canonical dependence of the Church of Apsilia. However, it seems likely that it had been under the jurisdiction of the Church of Lazica before Justinian's reign. The hypothesis is supported by certain details provided by Procopius of Caesarea. When he stated that the Apsilii had been Christian for a long time, he also mentioned that this people had been under rule of the Lazi.⁶¹ On the other hand, as already shown, Procopius also recalled the church situation of a Christian

59 For the scholarly opinions regarding the spread of Christianity in Apsilia, see Khroushkova, *Les monuments chrétiens*, p. 23; Khroushkova, "The Spread of Christianity," pp. 190–191; Vinogradov, "Some Notes," pp. 6–7.

60 For the Christian edifices in Tsibilia, see Khroushkova, *Les monuments chrétiens*, pp. 79–85; Khroushkova, "The Spread of Christianity," p. 207.

61 Procopius Caesariensis, *De bellis* VIII.2.33, pp. 495²⁶–496¹; trans., p. 73: "Λαζῶν δὲ κατήκοοί εἰσι καὶ Χριστιανοὶ γεγόνασιν ἐκ παλαιῶν οἱ Ἀψίλιοι" ("these Apsilii are subjects of the Lazi and have been Christians from ancient times").

people living on the Black Sea coast, between the Roman Empire and Lazica. About the Christian priests in that locale, the Byzantine historian asserted that they were ordained by the bishops of the Lazi, and not by those of the empire.⁶² These observations prove the influence of the Lazi Church in the region, and suggest the dependence of the Church of Apsilia (and of its bishopric, if it had existed before Justinian I's reign) on that of Lazica. In fact, it is not excluded for the Church of Lazica to have extended its jurisdiction over all Christian communities existing in the small kingdoms of the Caucasus, which were vassals of the Kingdom of Lazica at that time.

On the other hand, it is not excluded for the episcopal see of Apsilia to have been founded in the first years of Justinian I's reign. This hypothesis finds support in a small fragment of Proconnesian marble (a rare find in the mountainous zone) from the altar table of the Church in Tsibilia, and is not ruled out by the information above provided by Procopius. If this hypothesis is correct, then the bishopric in Apsilia was a suffragan of the Constantinopolitan patriarchate from the time of its organization.

In what concerns Abasgia, Procopius of Caesarea noted that it had been a pagan kingdom at the beginning of Justinian I's reign. Its conversion to Christianity took place at the initiative and with the direct support of this emperor. Procopius also mentioned that Justinian I built a sanctuary of the Virgin in Abasgia.⁶³ The remains of this episcopal cathedral were identified at Tsandripsh, close to the Black Sea shore (see Maps 6 and 7). It is a basilica with three naves, provided with a synthronon and a baptistery with a piscina.⁶⁴

The name of this newly founded episcopal see is not written in any document. Concerning its identification, it must be taken into account that Procopius does not mention the name of any city when he speaks about the Christianization of the Abasgi and the building of their cathedral by Emperor Justinian I. He only notes that the place of worship was built 'in their land.'⁶⁵ Important for the present topic is the discovery of a marble block containing the final part of an epitaph in which appears the name '[AB]ΑΣΓΙΑΣ'

62 Procopius Caesariensis, *De bellis* VIII.2.17, p. 493¹²⁻¹⁵; trans., p. 69.

63 Procopius Caesariensis, *De bellis* VIII.3.12-14, 18-21; 4.12, pp. 498¹⁹-499¹, 499¹⁷-500¹⁰, and 502¹⁶⁻¹⁸; trans., pp. 79, 81, and 87. For the scholarly opinions on the spread of the Christian faith in Abasgia, see Khroushkova, *Les monuments chrétiens*, p. 23; Khroushkova, "The Spread of Christianity," p. 190; Vinogradov, "Some Notes," pp. 5-6.

64 Khroushkova, *Les monuments chrétiens*, pp. 45-48; Khroushkova, "The Spread of Christianity," pp. 190 and 204-206.

65 Procopius Caesariensis, *De bellis* VIII.3.21, p. 500⁴⁻⁶; trans., p. 81: "τότε δὴ Ἰουστινιανὸς βασιλεὺς καὶ ἱερὸν τῆς θεοτόκου ἐν Ἀβασγοῖς οἰκοδομησάμενος" ("It was at that same time that the emperor Justinian also built a sanctuary of the Virgin in their land").

(‘of Abasgia’).⁶⁶ All these observations suggest that the official name of this episcopal see was ‘the bishopric of Abasgia’ or ‘the bishopric of [the nation of] the Abasgi’. As such, it would be similar to ‘the bishopric of Zechia’ or ‘the bishopric of [the nation of] the Zechi,’ founded at the same time (see below). The bishopric of Abasgia was, in fact, an episcopal see of the whole people of the Abasgi, being one of the missionary bishoprics for the barbarian peoples. Due to this status, and based on the provisions of canon 28 of the Council of Chalcedon (451), it must have been directly subordinated to the Church of Constantinople, belonging to no ecclesiastical province.⁶⁷

These conclusions also prove that the ecclesiastical province of Abasgia, registered in the old *Notitiae episcopatum*, was created after the reign of Justinian I. In most of these documents, the see of Sebastopolis is registered in its rubric, with the rank of autocephalous archbishopric (see above). The see of Nicopsis appears only in *Notitia* 3, next to the latter, also with the rank of autocephalous archbishopric.⁶⁸ The simultaneous activity of a bishopric of Abasgia and of a homonymous ecclesiastical province is excluded. Consequently, there are certainly two different historical phases. In the oldest of these, whose beginnings date to the reign of Justinian I, there was the bishopric of Abasgia. Later, most probably after the reign of this emperor, the ecclesiastical province of Abasgia was organized in place of the old bishopric.

An episcopal centre also functioned at Nicopsis, in the Kingdom of Zechia, on the eastern coast of the Black Sea.⁶⁹ This see was registered by most of the *Notitiae episcopatum* in the rubric for the ecclesiastical province of Zechia, as an autocephalous archbishopric, next to Chersonesus and Bosporus.⁷⁰ As shown in the previous paragraph, the see of Nicopsis appears within the ecclesiastical province of Abasgia only in *Notitia* 3—also as an autocephalous archbishopric, next to that of Sebastopolis.

Of utmost importance for the understanding of the evolution of this episcopal see is the information provided by Procopius of Caesarea. He specified that, in ancient times, the kings of Zechia received the royal insignia from the

66 Khroushkova, *Les monuments chrétiens*, pp. 51–53; Khroushkova, “The Spread of Christianity,” p. 206.

67 Tanner, *Decrees*, pp. 99–100.

68 Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum* 3.89, p. 233.

69 For the historical evolution of the Kingdom of Zechia, see Andrei Iu. Vinogradov, “Zikhiā” [Zechia], in *Pravoslavnaia énsiklopediā*, 20 (Moscow: Tserkovno-nauchnyi tsentr “Pravoslavnaia énsiklopediā,” 2009), pp. 186–192. Available at <https://www.pravenc.ru/text/199891.html>. Accessed 2022 June 2.

70 Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum* 1.64, p. 206; 2.68, p. 218; 4.65, p. 250; 5.69, p. 266.

Roman emperors.⁷¹ Therefore, that is a historical phase when the kingdom was a vassal of Rome. It is also attested by Arrian (2nd century AD), in *Periplus of the Euxine Sea* (XVIII.3).⁷² Procopius also wrote that Zechia was completely independent from the Roman Empire at his time.⁷³ Finally, speaking about the Alani, Abasgi, and Zechi, he mentioned only the first two peoples as Christian.⁷⁴ His silence about the last group suggests that the Christian faith was not widespread in Zechia, at least not at that time.⁷⁵

The name of Bishop 'Dometian of the nation of the Zechi' or 'Dometian of Zechia' appears in the attendance and signatories' lists of the Home Synod of 536.⁷⁶ Dometian's participation in this synod took place prior to the notes left by Procopius. At first sight, the Byzantine historian's assertions and the Synodal documents seem to be contradictory. Nevertheless, this apparent contradiction can be easily explained. Justinian I, who started and directly sustained the program of Christianization of the pagan peoples in the Caucasian area (the Abasgi, the Tzani), most probably also had in mind the conversion of the Zechi. To this end, he even founded a missionary bishopric for this people. Its first bishop must have been Dometian himself. However, unlike the Abasgi and the Tzani, whom, according to Procopius, the emperor managed to convert to Christianity, the mission among the Zechi was a failure. This situation can be explained by the fact that the empire did not occupy Zechia during the reign of Justinian I. That is why, without the support provided by the political and military context of the empire, the attempt to Christianize this people failed.⁷⁷

In what concerns the canonical dependence of the bishopric of Zechia, its status was most probably that of a bishopric of a barbarian people, like the bishopric of Abasgia. In these conditions, it must have been under the direct jurisdiction of the Church of Constantinople, not being assigned to any ecclesiastical province.

Extremely important is also the official name of this bishopric. As can be noticed, in 536 it did not bear the name of Nicopsis city, but that of the

71 Procopius Caesariensis, *De bellis* VIII.4.2, p. 500¹⁴⁻¹⁵; trans., p. 83.

72 Vinogradov, "Zikhiā," pp. 186–192.

73 Procopius Caesariensis, *De bellis* VIII.4.2, p. 500¹⁶⁻¹⁷; trans., p. 83.

74 Procopius Caesariensis, *De bellis* II.29.15, pp. 291²⁴⁻²⁹²²; trans., p. 533.

75 This point of view is also sustained by Andrei Vinogradov ("Zikhiā," pp. 186–192).

76 ACO, III, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1940), pp. 126²⁷, 184⁸, and 115³¹: 'Δομετιανού του Ζηρχῶν ἔθνους.' ACO, III, pp. 155⁵, 162²⁸, 171², and 283³²: 'Δομετιανού Ζιρχίας.'

77 The direct relationship between the political and military context and the Christian missionary activity carried out toward the peoples in Caucasus can be clearly understood from the testimony of Procopius of Caesarea about the Tzani's conversion to Christianity (see Procopius Caesariensis, *De Aedificiis* III.6.1–13, pp. 95²⁰⁻⁹⁷²¹; trans., pp. 205, 207, and 209).

country (Zechia) or of the people (the Zechi). On the one hand, this means that the ecclesiastical province of Zechia did not exist at that time. It must have been created after the reign of Justinian I, just as Abasgia. Moreover, the existence of the see of Nicopsis separated from that of Zechia at that time is excluded, because Dometian was the bishop of all the Zechi, as shown by his title. Consequently, the bishopric of Nicopsis must have been also founded in a historical phase subsequent to the reign of Justinian I.⁷⁸

The case of the bishopric of Zechia is important because it reveals the historical phases that marked the church organization of the barbarian peoples converted to Christianity during the reign of Justinian I. Initially, a bishopric of the whole people was created for each of them, under the direct jurisdiction of the Church of Constantinople. Later, in another historical phase, after the reign of Justinian I, ecclesiastical provinces bearing the names of these peoples (Abasgia, Zechia) were organized. They included one or more episcopal centres bearing the names of their cities of residence and not of the peoples. These new episcopal sees had the rank of autocephalous archbishoprics. Due to this rank, they were also under the direct jurisdiction of the Church of Constantinople.

6.4 The See of Chersonesus

As in the case of the Caucasian coast, many Greek colonies were founded on the northern shore of the Black Sea, starting from the end of the 7th century BC onward. Around the year 480 BC, the Bosporan Kingdom also developed there. It dominated the Crimean Peninsula and the steppe areas to the east of the Azov Sea. The Roman Empire, in full expansion in the Black Sea basin, occupied the cities of Tyras (now Bilhorod-Dnistrovskyi, Ukraine), Olbia (now Parutyne, Ukraine), and Chersonesus (now Sevastopol, Crimea-Ukraine). By the 1st century AD, the Kingdom of Bosphorus became a vassal of Rome. A setback of the Roman rule in the region was generated by the Goths' invasion in the second half of the 3rd century. The crisis was overcome by the empire under the rule of Diocletian and Galerius (305–311).⁷⁹

Regarding the church organization over the 4th–6th centuries, four episcopal centres are attested in documents in the northern area of the Black Sea. Three of them had their residence in the cities of Chersonesus,

78 This succession (the bishopric of Zechia → the bishopric of Nicopsis) is also sustained by Andrei Vinogradov ("Zikhiia," pp. 186–192).

79 Madgearu, "Expansiunea și decăderea," pp. 39–49.

Panticapaeum/Bosporus (now Kerch, Crimea-Ukraine), and Phanagoria (now Sennoy, Krasnodar Krai, Russia). The fourth episcopal see was that of the Goths in the Crimean Peninsula.

After the year 375, the city of Chersonesus became the headquarters of a Roman garrison again. It had been permanently under Roman rule from that moment until the end of the analyzed period (the middle of the 6th century). At that time, Procopius of Caesarea, describing the settlements on the northern shore of the Black Sea, characterized Chersonesus as “the limit of the Roman territory,” stating that the city “has likewise been subject to the Romans from of old.”⁸⁰ The Byzantine historian also mentioned that the settlement had been rebuilt by Emperor Justinian I.⁸¹

The exact foundation date for the episcopal see of Chersonesus is not known.⁸² The names of the first hierarchs known there are mentioned in the *Lives of the Bishops of Chersonesus*.⁸³ This hagiographic document, preserved in many versions, briefly presents the missionary activity of six hierarchs of Chersonesus (Basileus, Eugenius, Agathodorus, Elpidius, Aetherius, and Capiton). The rule of the first five of them is attributed in the text to the reigns of Diocletian and Constantine I, whereas that of the last one (Capiton) to the reign of Constantine I (in five manuscripts) or to that of Theodosius I (in one manuscript).⁸⁴ Another hagiographic document (*The Miracle of Saint*

80 Procopius Caesariensis, *De bellis* I.12.7, p. 57²⁻³; trans., p. 97: “ἡ [i.e., Χερσῶν] γῆς τῆς Ῥωμαίων ἐσχάτη ἐστίν.” See also, Procopius Caesariensis, *De Aedificiis* III.7.10, pp. 100²⁴⁻¹⁰¹; trans., pp. 215 and 217. Procopius Caesariensis, *De bellis* VIII.5.27, p. 508⁴⁻⁵; trans., p. 97: “Ῥωμαίων δὲ καὶ αὐτὴ [i.e., Χερσῶν] κατήκοος ἐκ παλαιοῦ ἐστι.”

81 Procopius Caesariensis, *De Aedificiis* III.7.10, pp. 100²⁴⁻¹⁰¹; trans., pp. 215 and 217.

82 In some versions of the list of signatories of the First Council of Nicaea (325), appears also the name of Philip of Chersonesus (Φίλιππος Χερσῶνος/Χερσεῶνος)—see Ernst Honigmann, “La liste originale des pères de Nicée. A propos de l’Évêché de « Sodooma » en Arabie,” *Byzantion* 14 (1939), p. 55 (no. 146); Alexander A. Vasiliev, *The Goths in the Crimea* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Mediaeval Academy of America, 1936), pp. 13–14 and 20. However, this signature is considered as a later addition, without historical value—see Zuckerman, “The Early Byzantine Strongholds,” p. 546; Constantine Zuckerman, “Episcopcy i garnizon Khersona v IV veke” [Bishops and Garrison of Chersonesus in the 4th Century], *Materialy po archeologii, istorii i étnografii Tavrii* 4 (1995), p. 546, n. 3.

83 For the scholarly opinions on the historical value of this document, see Īu.M. Mogarichev, A.V. Sazanov, T.É. Sargsiān, S.B. Sorochan, and A.K. Shaposhnikov, *Zhitiia episkopov Chersonskich v kontekste istorii Chersonesa Tavricheskogo* [The Lives of the Bishops of Cherson within the Context of the History of Tauric Chersonesos], (Narteks Byzantina Ukrainensis) 1 (Kharkiv: Antikva, 2012), pp. 9–20.

84 Andrei Īu. Vinogradov, «Minovala uzhe zima iazycheskogo bezumiia ...» *Tserkov' i tserkvi Hersona v IV veke po dannym literaturnyh istochnikov i épigrafiiki* [«The Winter of Pagan Madness Has Already Passed ...» The Church and Churches of Chersonesus in the

Capiton), dedicated to Capiton, places his rule and the death of his predecessor (Aetherius) in the reign of Theodosius I, fact that confirms the correctness of this dating.⁸⁵

The existence of these bishops is credible, as their names were likely found in the lists with the local hierarchs preserved by the Church in Chersonesus and used within the liturgical services, or in its calendar.⁸⁶ Nevertheless, the chronology of their rule, as it appears in the hagiographic text, obviously suffered alterations. The clearest proof in this respect is the dating of Capiton's spiritual leadership during the reign of Constantine I by most of the manuscripts of the *Lives*. The dating of Aetherius' activity during the reign of the same emperor is also erroneous. Being Capiton's direct predecessor, he must have led the Church of Chersonesus in the second half of the 4th century.⁸⁷ Moreover, as already mentioned, his death is dated during the reign of Theodosius I in the *Miracle of Saint Capiton*. Many scholars have identified him with the homonymous hierarch who participated in the First Council of Constantinople (381), attested as a suffragan of the metropolitan of Tomi.⁸⁸

4th Century according to Literary Sources and Epigraphy] (Moscow: Universitet Dmitriiã Pozharskogo, 2010), pp. 18, 22, 40–41, 50, and 65–66.

- 85 Andrei ū. Vinogradov, "Khersones-Kherson: dve istorii odnogo goroda. Imena, mesta i daty v istoricheskoi pamiãti polisa" [Chersonesus and Cherson: Two Histories of One City. Names, Places, and Dates in the Historical Memory of the City], *Vestnik drevnei istorii/Journal of Ancient History* 40 (2013), no. 1, p. 54 (no. 1); *Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae* Dec. 22, no. 2, in Hippolyte Delehaye, *Synaxarium Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae e Codice Sirmondiano nunc Berolinensi*, (Acta Sanctorum. Propylaeum ad Acta Sanctorum Novembris) (Brussels: Apud Socios Bollandianos, 1902), p. 336⁵⁻⁹.
- 86 See also Zuckerman, "The Early Byzantine Strongholds," p. 548; Zuckerman, "Episcopopy i garnizon Khersona," p. 547; Vinogradov, «*Minovala uzhe zima*», pp. 41–43; Mogarichev, Sazanov, Sargsian, Sorochan and Shaposhnikov, *Zhitiã episkopov Chersonskich*, pp. 363–364.
- 87 Vinogradov, «*Minovala uzhe zima*», pp. 65–66. In only one manuscript is specified that Capiton's rule started long time after that of Aetherius.
- 88 See Michael Le Quien, *Oriens christianus*, 1 (Paris: Ex typographia regia, 1740), col. 1329; Jacques Zeiller, *Les origines chrétiennes dans les provinces danubiennes de l'empire romain* (Paris: De Boccard, 1918), p. 41; Ioan Rãmureanu, "Sfinți și martiri la Tomis" [Saints and Martyrs in Tomi], *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 92 (1974), nos. 7–8, p. 981; Zuckerman, "The Early Byzantine Strongholds," pp. 548–549; Zuckerman, "Episcopopy i garnizon Khersona," pp. 547–549; Alexander I. Aïbabin, *Ètnicheskaïa istoriã rannevizantiiskogo Kryma* [Ethnic History of the Early Byzantine Crimea] (Simferopol: DAR, 1999), pp. 52–53; Vinogradov, «*Minovala uzhe zima*», pp. 55, 58, and 63–64; Vinogradov, "Khersones-Kherson," pp. 44 and 49. According to another idea, there were two hierarchs of Chersonesus named Aetherius. The first one, mentioned in the *Lives of the Bishops of Chersonesus*, is considered to have led the Church during the reign of Constantine I, whereas the second participated in the First Council of Constantinople, during the reign of Theodosius I—see Vasilii V.

Another altered piece of information presented in the hagiographic document is about the dependence of the Church of Chersonesus on that of Jerusalem at the time of the first five hierarchs. The text shows that Basileus and three of his successors (Eugenius, Agathodorus, and Elpidius) were ordained by Hermon of Jerusalem (300–312) in the year 300. It is there that Aetherius was also later ordained, according to the same document.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, the see of Aelia Capitolina (the name of the city of Jerusalem at that time) was under the jurisdiction of the metropolitan see of Caesarea (Palaestina Prima) during the reign of Diocletian. Only at the First Council of Nicaea (325) was the bishopric of Aelia (Jerusalem) granted an honorific primacy, but not also the rights due to a metropolitan see.⁹⁰ Therefore, the dependence of the Church of Chersonesus on that of Jerusalem was not possible. The origin of this tradition was explained by the Syro-Palestinian origins of the Christian community in Chersonesus and by the relations that it maintained with the Churches in that area.⁹¹

The hagiographic text also presents the fact that the Church of Chersonesus was removed from the authority of the Church of Jerusalem and its jurisdiction was transferred to that of the Church of Constantinople at the time of Aetherius. The event occurred when this bishop asked the emperor of Constantinople for help to put an end to the aggression of the pagan in Chersonesus against the Christian people in the city. As a result of the ecclesiastical jurisdiction change, the document mentions that Aetherius' successor, Capiton, was no longer elected in Jerusalem, as his predecessors, but in Constantinople.⁹²

Latyshev, "Zhitiia sviatykh episkopov Hersonskikh. Issledovanie i teksty" [The Lives of the Holy Bishops of Chersonesus. Study and Texts], *Zapiski Imperatorskoï Akademii nauk. Istoriko-filologicheskoe otdelenie* 8 (1906), no. 3, pp. 18–20; Mogarichev, Sazanov, Sargsian, Sorochan, and Shaposhnikov, *Zhitiia episkopov Chersonskikh*, pp. 9–20; Lūdмила G. Khrushkova, "Tauric Chersonesus (Crimea) in the 4th–5th Centuries: Suburban Martyria," in *Proceedings of the 21st International Congress of Byzantine Studies, London 21–26 August 2006*, 2, ed. Elizabeth Jeffreys (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2006), n. 15. The last-mentioned idea was rejected by Andrei Vinogradov («*Minovalva uzhe zima*», p. 55).

89 Vinogradov, «*Minovalva uzhe zima*», pp. 18, 22, 40–41, and 50.

90 Tanner, *Decrees*, p. 9 (can. 7).

91 Vinogradov, «*Minovalva uzhe zima*», pp. 20, 23–24, 39–40, 42, 49–51, 55, 63–64, 131–132, and 155–156.

92 Vinogradov, «*Minovalva uzhe zima*», pp. 52, 58–59, and 65–66. See also Vinogradov, "Khersones-Kherson," p. 54 (no. 1); *Syn.Eccl.Const.* Dec. 22, no. 2, p. 336^{5–9}. The transfer of the Church of Chersonesus under that of Constantinople at the time of Bishop Aetherius is also sustained by Andrei Vinogradov («*Minovalva uzhe zima*», pp. 50–61, 64–65, and 155–156).

This information shows that the see of Chersonesus was not integrated within the metropolitan organization system in the first three quarters of the 4th century.⁹³ Only at the time of Aetherius' rule was it made part of the ecclesiastical structures associated with Constantinople. This event is related, in fact, to the creation of the ecclesiastical province of Scythia and to the transfer of Chersonesus under the jurisdiction of Tomi in the year 381. It is confirmed by the presence of Aetherius' signature in the rubric for Scythia within the list of signatories at the First Council of Constantinople.⁹⁴

It is not possible to identify the place where the bishops of Chersonesus were ordained before 381. In the *Lives*, it is mentioned that, after the death of Basileus, his disciples left for Hellespontus, wherefrom they brought to Chersonesus the following three bishops (Eugenius, Agathodorus, and Elpidius), previously ordained by Hermon of Jerusalem. This paragraph shows the relations of the see of Chersonesus with the episcopal centres in the southern part of the Black Sea before 381. Sozomen also mentions in his *Church History* the death in Nicomedia (Bithynia, diocese of Pontica) of a bishop of Bosporus in 358 (28 August).⁹⁵ This is another proof of the relations of the bishops of Crimea with the bishoprics of the Roman cities in the Black Sea area. This information leads to the supposition that the bishops of Chersonesus were ordained in some of these episcopal centres.

In the list of signatories of the First Council of Constantinople, the see of Chersonesus is attested as a suffragan of the metropolitan see of Tomi.⁹⁶ Its integration in ecclesiastical Scythia took place at the time of the organization of this church province, in 381 (May–July), during Aetherius' rule.⁹⁷

Three other bishops are also known over the 5th–6th centuries at Chersonesus: Asclepiades (c.419), Longinus (418–419), and Stephen (c.553). The name of the first of them is mentioned in a law issued by Emperors Honorius

93 See also Hans-Georg Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich*, (Byzantinisches Handbuch im Rahmen des Handbuchs de Altertumswissenschaft) 11/1 (Munich: Beck, 1959), p. 176.

94 See above, subchapter 2.2.1: 'The end of the 4th and the first half of the 5th century AD.'

95 Sozomenos, *Historia ecclesiastica* IV.16.2–5, in *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Christian Hansen Günther, (Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller) 4 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995), p. 150^{2–24}; Sozomen, *The Ecclesiastical History*, trans. Chester D. Hartranft, (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers) 11/2 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 692.

96 See Ernst Honigsmann, "Recherches sur les listes des Pères de Nicée et de Constantinople," *Byzantion* 11 (1936), p. 446, and above, subchapter 2.2.1: 'The end of the 4th and the first half of the 5th century AD.'

97 See above, subchapter 2.3.2: 'Dating the foundation of ecclesiastical Scythia.'

(384–423) and Theodosius II on 24 September 419.⁹⁸ His rank within the Church cannot be established based on the information exposed in the text of the law. However, given the fact that both his predecessor (Aetherius) and his successor (Longinus) are attested as suffragan bishops, Asclepiades must have had the same rank. Longinus is attested as a suffragan bishop in three documents: the list of signatories of the Home Synod of 448 (22 November), the attendance lists of the hearing of 449 (13 April), and of the Second Council of Ephesus (8 August 449).⁹⁹ The lists are written in agreement with the hierarchical principle. The metropolitans are mentioned or sign in the first part and the suffragan bishops in the final part of the lists. Longinus appears every time in the group of the suffragan bishops. In 448, his signature appears on the penultimate position on the list (no. 12), being preceded by those of other six suffragan bishops.¹⁰⁰ At the hearing of 449, his name (no. 14, on the list) is registered in the first part of the group of suffragan bishops (the sixth, out of 21 suffragan bishops).¹⁰¹ On the attendance list of the Second Council of Ephesus, Longinus' name is mentioned in the compact group of suffragan bishops (no. 105).¹⁰² Stephen's name appears in the list of signatories of the Second Council of Constantinople (553). His rank within the Church cannot be established based on this evidence, however, as Stephen did not participate in the council, but only signed the decrees when its sessions concluded.¹⁰³ The form of his signature is not relevant, either: "*Stephanus misericordia dei episcopus Chersonis. Similiter*" ("Stephen by the mercy of God bishop of Chersonesus,

98 *Codex Theodosianus* VIII.40.24, in *Theodosiani libri XVI cum constitutionibus Sirmondianis et Leges Novellae ad Theodosianum pertinentes*, I/2, eds. Theodor Mommsen and Paul Martin Meyer (Berlin: Königlich Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1905), p. 507²⁻³; *The Theodosian Code and Novels and the Sirmondian Constitutions*, in *The Corpus of Roman Law (Corpus Juris Romani)*, 1, trans., comment., gloss., and bibliogr. Clyde Pharr, Theresa Sherrer Davidson, and Mary Brown Pharr, intro. C. Dickerman Williams (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1952), p. [258].

99 22 November 448: *ACO*, II/1.1, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1933), p. 146¹. 13 April 449: *ACO*, II/1.1, p. 148¹⁹. 8 August 449: *ACO*, II/1.1, p. 81⁷.

100 The only exception from the hierarchical principle is the signature of Metropolitan Dorotheus of Neocaesarea (Pontus Polemoniacus).

101 The only exception from the hierarchical principle is the mention of Metropolitan Candidianus of Antioch (Pisidia) in the group of suffragan bishops.

102 On the position of Bishop Longinus of Chersonesus in the attendance list of 8 August 449 and his rank within the Church at that time, see Ernst Honigmann, "The Original Lists of Members of the Council of Nicaea, of the Robber-Synod and the Council of Chalcedon," *Byzantion* 16 (1942–1943), no. 1, pp. 36 (no. 107) and 40–41.

103 See Richard Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553 with Related Texts on the Three Chapters Controversy*, 2, (Translated Texts for Historians) 51 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), p. 138, n. 107.

similarly”).¹⁰⁴ In its content, the city of Chersonesus does not appear with the rank of ‘metropolis’ (‘μητροπόλις’), a term by which metropolitans designated their ecclesiastical rank at that time. Nevertheless, this aspect does not constitute a certain proof that the Crimean see continued to have the rank of an ordinary bishopric, as some metropolitans avoided using this term, probably out of humility. Such a case is that of Metropolitan John of Bosphorus, at the Home Synod of 536 (see below).

What is certain, however, is that the bishopric of Chersonesus was raised at some point to the rank of an autocephalous archbishopric (titular metropolis). In *Notitiae episcopatum*, it is registered with this rank within the ecclesiastical province of Zechia, either next to Bosphorus and Nicopsis, or (in only one *Notitia*) with Bosphorus and Sugdaia.¹⁰⁵ This means that after 449, when a hierarch of Chersonesus (Longinus) is certainly attested for the last time as an ordinary bishop, the see there was raised in rank. The event surely took place after 451, as the rank of titular metropolis (autocephalous archbishopric) was created at the Council of Chalcedon (451), through canon 12.¹⁰⁶ Chersonesus was not a titular metropolis in 457–458, either, as, the name of its hierarch does not appear in *Encyclia* in the list with the addressees of the questionnaire letter sent by Emperor Leo I.¹⁰⁷ At that time, the emperor directly addressed the hierarchs with the rank of metropolitans (titular metropolitans included).¹⁰⁸

A clue for the dating of this event is represented by the ratio between the sees of Chersonesus and Bosphorus resulting from the lists with autocephalous archbishoprics in the old *Notitiae episcopatum*. In all these, the see of Chersonesus comes before that of Bosphorus, which suggests the primacy of the first over the second. Based on this aspect, it may be supposed that the elevation in rank of the bishopric of Chersonesus was either prior to, or at least contemporary with, the raising of that of Bosphorus.¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, in agreement with the provisions of canon 12 of Chalcedon (451), such a promotion was the result of the raising of their cities of residence to the rank of metropolises. Considering that, according to the testimony of Procopius of

104 ACO, IV/1, ed. Johannes Straub (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1971), p. 231⁷.

105 With Bosphorus and Nicopsis: Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum* 1.62, p. 206; 2.66, p. 218; 4.63, p. 250; 5.67, p. 266. With Bosphorus and Sugdaia: Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum* 3.82, p. 232.

106 Tanner, *Decrees*, p. 93. See also Evangelos Chrysos, “Zur Entstehung der Institution der Autokephalen Erzbistümer,” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 62 (1969), pp. 263–286.

107 ACO, II/5, pp. 22³²–24²⁸.

108 See above, subchapter 2.2.2: ‘The *Encyclia* (457–458) of emperor Leo I.’

109 Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum* 1.62–63, p. 206; 2.66–67, p. 218; 3.82–83, p. 232; 4.63–64, p. 250; 5.67–68, p. 266.

Caesarea, the two settlements (Chersonesus and Bosphorus) were rebuilt during the reign of Justinian I (see above and below, respectively) and that between 2 and 6 May 536 Bosphorus was granted the rank of metropolis, it is possible for Chersonesus to have also acquired this status in the same historical context. In this case, the promotion of the two sees to the rank of autocephalous archbishoprics took place at the same time (536).

On the ground of its new rank (titular metropolis/autocephalous archbishopric), following the provisions of canon 28 of the Council of Chalcedon (451), Chersonesus left the jurisdiction of the metropolis of Tomi and was assigned to that of the Church of Constantinople.¹¹⁰ In what concerns the ecclesiastical province to which the see of Chersonesus belonged at that time, there is no clear indication. Two possibilities may be considered in this respect. According to one of them, the sees of Chersonesus and Bosphorus could have been removed from ecclesiastical Scythia and assigned to a newly created ecclesiastical province. However, this hypothetical province certainly did not bear the name of Zechia, as, at that time (536), this kingdom had not been converted to Christianity yet. Moreover, it was not subjected to the Roman Empire (see above). On the other hand, the subsequent foundation of the ecclesiastical Zechia points against this hypothesis. It would have been natural for the name of the hypothetical province established in 536 (being part of the church heritage of the region) to have been preserved at the moment when Chersonesus, Bosphorus, and Nicopsis (then Sugdaia) were associated. All the more so as the main sees of the ecclesiastical Zechia (positions 1 and 2 within it) were exactly Chersonesus and Bosphorus, which were older than Nicopsis and Sugdaia. Therefore, it would have been much easier and natural to assign the last-mentioned sees to the hypothetical ecclesiastical province organized in 536, and not to create a new one (Zechia).

Finally, the organization of an ecclesiastical province formed only of autocephalous archbishoprics (Chersonesus and Bosphorus), characterized, therefore, in its internal structure by the absence of a great metropolis and of any suffragan bishopric, is more specific to the 7th century (at the earliest), and not to the first half of the 6th century.

The second possibility is for the sees of Chersonesus and Bosphorus to have remained within ecclesiastical Scythia even after 536, until the moment of the foundation of ecclesiastical Zechia. Even if this situation is not attested in any of the known documents, it is more probable, sustained also by the logical exclusion of the other possibility. The absence of the sees of Chersonesus and Bosphorus from the rubric dedicated to Scythia in *Notitia episcopatum* 3

¹¹⁰ Tanner, *Decrees of the ecumenical councils*, pp. 99–100.

does not exclude the possibility. Moreover, due to their new rank, their names were registered in *Notitiae* within the list of autocephalous archbishoprics, and not in the rubrics dedicated to suffragan bishoprics. As for their placement in Zechia in the lists of autocephalous archbishoprics in *Notitiae*, the information displays the situation after the creation of this province.

In conclusion, the episcopal see of Chersonesus went through the following phases: 1. Until 381, it served as an ordinary bishopric, not integrated into the metropolitan organization system; 2. 381–c.536, it functioned as a suffragan bishopric of the metropolitan see of Tomi in the ecclesiastical province of Scythia; 3. c.536–7th century, it held the rank of an autocephalous archbishopric in ecclesiastical Scythia.

6.5 The See of Bosphorus

The political situation of the city of Panticapaeum/Bosphorus during the 4th–6th centuries is not entirely clear. In the year 323, king Rhadamsades (309–322) led an expedition toward the Danube, trying to escape Roman domination. His army was defeated by Emperor Constantine I and the Bosphoran Kingdom remained a satellite state of the Roman Empire. The last king of Bosphorus attested in documents is Rhescuporis VI (303–342). His death is supposed to have marked the disintegration of the Bosphoran Kingdom. However, the city of Bosphorus continued its existence under the control of the Goths (between 343 and 362), and then under Hunnic rule (from 376 on), according to certain scholars. By the middle of the 5th century, the city was again under the influence of the Roman Empire and it became a Roman possession at the beginning of the reign of Justinian I. It was rebuilt and raised to the rank of metropolis between 2 and 6 May 536.¹¹¹

In the 1st book of the *History of the Wars*, Procopius of Caesarea states that “in ancient times the people of Bosphorus were autonomous, but lately they had

111 On the history of Bosphoran Kingdom and the situation of the city of Panticapaeum/Bosphorus after the dissolution of this state, see Vasiliev, *The Goths*, pp. 21–32, 38–40, and 70–73; Viktor F. Gajdukevič, *Das Bosphoranische Reich* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag; Amsterdam: Hakkert, 1971), pp. 497–519; Yuri G. Vinogradov, “The Late Classical Bosphorus and Early Byzantium (In the Light of Dated Bosphoran Inscriptions of the Fifth Century),” *Ancient Civilizations from Scythia to Siberia* 5 (1999), no. 3, pp. 245–269; N. Frolova, “The Question of Continuity in the Late Classical Bosphorus on the Basis of Numismatic Data,” *Ancient Civilizations from Scythia to Siberia* 5 (1999), no. 3, pp. 179–205; Madgearu, “Expansiunea și decăderea,” pp. 50–51 and 55–56. On the raising of the city of Bosphorus to the rank of metropolis during the reign of Justinian I, see below.

decided to become subject to the Emperor Justin I (518–527).¹¹² Nevertheless, this plan was carried out during the reign of Justinian I. In the 2nd book of the *History of the Wars*, Procopius suggests that Bosphorus had been under Hunnic rule when it was occupied by the Romans, at the time of Justinian I,¹¹³ and he emphasizes this assertion on two other occasions. In *The Buildings*, he mentions that, in the old times, Bosphorus had been a barbarian city under Hunnic rule, brought by Emperor Justinian I under Roman rule and rebuilt.¹¹⁴ Also, in the 8th book of the *History of the Wars*, the Byzantine historian asserts that the city falls under Roman rule ‘not long ago’ (‘οὐ πολλῶ πρότερον’).¹¹⁵

In what concerns the canonical situation of the bishopric of Bosphorus, this is not easy to define, as there is no documentary evidence.¹¹⁶ The political situation of this city during the second half of the 4th century and in the first half of the 5th is not fully clarified at the moment, which makes this analysis even more difficult.

The first known bishop of Bosphorus is Cadmus, who was a participant in the First Council of Nicaea (325). His signature [‘Κάδμος Βοσπόρου’ (‘Cadmus of Bosphorus’)] appears by the rubric ‘Bosphorus’ (‘Βοσπόρου-Bosphori/Bosfori/Bospori’) in the conciliar documents.¹¹⁷ This information certifies that the bishopric of Bosphorus was not part of any of the ecclesiastical provinces of the Roman Empire at that time. This situation is similar to that of the neighbouring see of Chersonesus, which was out of the metropolitan organization system before 381, as already shown.

On the other hand, the attestation of the rubric ‘Bosphorus’ in the documents of the First Council of Nicaea raises the issue of the ecclesiastical organization in the North-Pontic kingdom in the year 325. It remains to be clarified if there were more episcopal sees, or that of Panticapaeum/Bosphorus was the only one on the territory. It must be taken into account that an episcopal see is attested in documents in the first quarter of the 6th century at Phanagoria (see below), the former Asian metropolis of Bosphoran Kingdom. At that time, the city was

112 Procopius Caesariensis, *De bellis* I.12.8, in Procopius Caesariensis, *Opera omnia*, 1, p. 57⁴⁻⁶; Procopius of Caesarea, *History of the Wars* 1.12.8, in Procopius, *On Buildings, History of the Wars, and Secret History*, 1, p. 97.

113 Procopius Caesariensis, *De bellis* II.3.40, pp. 159²⁶–160²; trans., p. 281.

114 Procopius Caesariensis, *De Aedificiis* III.7.10–12, pp. 100²⁴–101⁷; trans., pp. 215 and 217.

115 Procopius Caesariensis, *De bellis* VIII.5.26, p. 508¹⁻³; trans., p. 97.

116 On the spread of the Christian faith in the city of Bosphorus, see Pavel D. Diatropov, “The Spread of Christianity in the Bosphorus in the 3rd–6th Centuries,” *Ancient Civilizations from Scythia to Siberia* 5 (1999), no. 3, pp. 215–244.

117 Gelzer, Hilgenfeld, and Cuntz, *Patrum nicaenorum*, pp. LXIV, 56–57, 70, 117, 141 (*Marcus Bospori*), and 215. Ernst Honigsmann (“La liste originale,” p. 48) considers the possibility that the bishop of Bosphorus was not mentioned in the original list of the council.

under Roman rule but, even so, the possibility for the bishopric to have been founded even before the dissolution of the Bosporan Kingdom (342) remains open. In such a case, on the territory of this state a situation similar to that of Lazica could have existed, which had its own episcopal network before its occupation by the Romans, during the reign of Justinian I (see above).

The results of the archaeological investigations do not provide data to explain this issue. All the basilicas discovered on the territory of the former North-Pontic kingdom, including those of the capital-city, Bosporus, date to the 5th–6th centuries.¹¹⁸ However, it is to be noticed that the existence of the bishopric of Bosporus is repeatedly attested over the 4th–5th centuries (in 325, 358, 448, 449), whereas that of Phanagoria is attested only in 518. This situation could be explained in two ways: either the see of Phanagoria did not exist before the occupation of the city by the Romans in the second half of the 5th century, or it was less important than that of Bosporus, the latter representing the interests of the Christian communities on the territory of the (former) Bosporan Kingdom in the Roman Empire. The last-mentioned case would suppose the subordination of the see of Phanagoria to that of Bosporus, the status of the latter being similar to that of a metropolis. Still, the possibility of such an organization is contradicted by the fact that Bosporus is repeatedly attested as an ordinary bishopric in the second half of the 5th and the first half of the 6th centuries. Within the hierarchical synodal lists of 448 (22 November), 449 (8 and 13 April), 449 (8 August), 458/459, 518 (20 July), and 536 (2 May), the hierarchs of this city always appear together with the suffragan bishops (see below). This means that their rank within the Church was equal to that of the suffragan bishops in the empire, and not to that of the metropolitans. In this case, it seems less probable for Bosporus to have been leading a metropolitan-type ecclesiastical structure functioning on the territory of the (former) Bosporan Kingdom and, implicitly, for the bishopric of Phanagoria to have existed before the occupation of the city by the Romans. Also, it seems less probable for another episcopal see to have existed on the territory of the Bosporan Kingdom, together with that of Bosporus.

Furthermore, it remains to be explained which was the canonical status of this bishopric. Most probably, it had not been integrated into the metropolitan organization system before 381. Its situation seems to have been similar to that of the bishopric of Chersonesus. The death of one of the hierarchs of Bosporus (not known by his name) during the earthquake on 28 August 358, in Nicomedia (Bithynia), constitutes an indication of the relations of the

118 Diatropov, "The Spread of Christianity," pp. 242–244; Andrei Țu. Vinogradov and Viktor N. Chkhaidze, "Pozdneantichnaia khristianskaia nadpis' iz Fanagorii" [A Christian Inscription from Phanagoria], *Vestnik drevnei istorii* 3 (282) (2012), p. 54.

hierarchs of Bosphorus with the Churches in the Roman Empire and of their ordination in the episcopal centres there.¹¹⁹

This canonical situation seems to have continued until 381, when the bishopric of Bosphorus came, most probably, under the jurisdiction of the metropolis of Tomi, within ecclesiastical Scythia.¹²⁰ Even if there are no strong arguments in favour of this hypothesis, certain documentary information supports it, nevertheless. First, the bishops of Bosphorus actively participated in the ecclesiastical life of the Roman Empire during the 5th and 6th centuries. They are attested at four Home Synods (448, 458/459, 518, and 536), at the hearing held in Constantinople (8 and 13 April 449), and at the Second Council of Ephesus (449), convoked as an ecumenical council. Unlike the bishops of Bosphorus, none of the hierarchs in Lazica, where there was an autonomous episcopal structure, is attested at any of the councils carried out within the Roman Empire. Similarly, those of Persarmenia, a territory under the rule of the Persian Empire, were not involved in the church life of the Roman Empire.¹²¹ This difference between Bosphorus, on the one hand, and Lazica and Persarmenia, on the other hand, could be explained by the fact that the North-Pontic bishopric was integrated within the episcopal structures on the territory of the Roman Empire.

Transfer of Bosphorus under the jurisdiction of Tomi is supported by the participation of its hierarchs together with those of Chersonesus in the Home Synod of 448 (22 November), in the hearing of 449 (13 April), and in the Second Council of Ephesus 449 (8 August). The attendance list of the last-mentioned council is the most important for the present analysis, as its content shows the attempt at grouping the suffragan bishops according to the provinces to which they belonged. Placing together the names of the bishops of Chersonesus and Bosphorus (positions 105 and 106, respectively) may indicate that their sees belonged to the same ecclesiastical province (Scythia).

The bishops of Bosphorus are attested as suffragan bishops between the year 448 and 2 May 536. At the Home Synod of 448, Bishop Eudoxius was represented by presbyter Basiliscus, whose signature appears on the synodal documents in line with the suffragan bishops.¹²² Within the list of signatories of the synod there are 26 signatures grouped according to the hierarchical criterion.

119 Sozomenos, *Historia ecclesiastica* IV.16.2–5, p. 159^{2–24}; trans., p. 692.

120 See above, subchapter 2.3.1: ‘The incipient structure of the ecclesiastical province of Scythia.’

121 On Persarmenia, see Nina G. Garsoïan, ‘Armenia,’ in *The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*, 1, eds. Alexander P. Kazhdan et al. (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 175.

122 *ACO*, II/1.1, p. 146^{19–20}: ‘Εὐδόξιος (ἐπίσκοπος πόλεως) Βοσπόρου (ὑπέγραψα) ὀρίσας διὰ τοῦ πρεσβυτέρου Βασιλίσκου’ (‘Eudoxius <bishop of the city of> Bosphorus, <I have signed and> decreed through the presbyter Basiliscus’).

That of Basiliscus occupies position 26, being preceded by the signatures of 19 ordinary bishops and followed by those of other four suffragans.¹²³ The name of Bishop Eudoxius is mentioned in two hierarchical attendance lists (8 and 13 April) at the hearing of 449. In the first one, he is mentioned at position 23 of the list, being preceded by 13 ordinary bishops and followed by other five suffragans.¹²⁴ In the second list (13 April), his name appears at position 21, in the middle of the group of suffragan bishops, being preceded by 12 of these and followed by another 12.¹²⁵ In the attendance list on 8 August 449 of the Second Council of Ephesus, the name of the same Eudoxius is mentioned in the compact group of the suffragan bishops (no. 106).¹²⁶ The see of Bosphorus was an ordinary bishopric also in 457–458, as, the name of the North-Pontic hierarch does not appear in the list of the *Encyclia* with the addressees of the questionnaire letter sent by Emperor Leo I.¹²⁷ It must be remembered that the metropolitans (including titular metropolitans) were direct addressees of the emperor's letter.¹²⁸ The same Eudoxius is again attested as an ordinary bishop at the Home Synod of 458/459. In the list of signatories of the synod, drawn up according to the hierarchical criterion, his signature appears in the group of ordinary hierarchs (no. 39), being preceded by the signatures of 19 suffragans and followed by those of other 41.¹²⁹ At the beginning of the 6th century, John of Bosphorus is also attested as an ordinary bishop at the Home Synod

123 *ACO*, II/1.1, pp. 145²⁰–147³¹. The only exception from the hierarchical criterion of the list is the signature of Metropolitan Dorotheus of Neocaesarea (Pontus Polemoniacus), who signed after two suffragan bishops.

124 *ACO*, II/1.1, pp. 150¹–151²; p. 150²⁷: “Εὐδοξίου τοῦ εὐλαβεστάτου ἐπισκόπου τῆς Βοσπορηγῶν πόλεως” (“Eudoxius the most devout bishop of the city of the Bosphorans”). The only exception from the hierarchical criterion of the list is the mention of the suffragan Bishop Trypho of Chios before two metropolitans.

125 *ACO*, II/1.1, pp. 148⁴–149²⁰; p. 148³¹: “Εὐδοξίου τοῦ εὐλαβεστάτου ἐπισκόπου τῆς Βοσπορηγῶν πόλεως” (“Eudoxius the most devout bishop of the city of the Bosphorans”). The only exception from the hierarchical criterion of the list is the mention of Metropolitan Candidianus of Antioch in the second part of the group of suffragan bishops.

126 *ACO*, II/1.1, pp. 77^{17–19}, 24–26 and 78¹⁵–82⁶; p. 81⁸: “καὶ Εὐδοξίου Βοσπόρων” (“and Eudoxius of Bosphorus”). On the position of Bishop Eudoxius of Bosphorus in the attendance list of 8 August 449 and his church rank at that time, see also Honigmann, “The Original Lists,” pp. 36 (no. 108) and 40–41.

127 *ACO*, II/5, pp. 22³²–24²⁸.

128 See above, subchapter 2.2.2: ‘The *Encyclia* (457–458) of emperor Leo I.’

129 Eduard Schwartz, *Publizistische sammlungen zum acacianischen schisma* (Munich: Beck, 1934), pp. 176–177, n. 1; p. 176, n. 1, no. 39: “Εὐδόξιος ἐπίσκοπος Βοσπόρου ὑπέγραψα” (“Eudoxius bishop of Bosphorus I have signed”). In this list appear 81 signatures, grouped according to the hierarchical criterion. The only exception from this criterion is the signature of the titular Metropolitan Serenus of Maximianopolis in Rhodope, which appears in the second part of the group of suffragan bishops.

of 518 (16–20 July). In the list of signatories of 20 July, made in agreement with the hierarchical criterion, his signature appears at the beginning of the group of ordinary bishops (no. 11), being preceded by those of two suffragans and followed by other 31.¹³⁰

The see of Bosphorus entered a new historical phase between 2 and 6 May 536. At the Home Synod of 536 (2 May), it is attested for the last time as an ordinary bishopric.¹³¹ After only four days, on 6 May, it appears with the rank of metropolis: “Ἰωάννου τῆς μητροπόλεως Βοσπόρου” (‘John of the metropolis of Bosphorus’).¹³² It appears with the same rank also in the following three sessions of the synod (10 and 21 May and 4 June 536).¹³³ Bosphorus acquired the rank of a titular metropolis (autocephalous archbishopric), and not of a great metropolis (see below). Due to this new rank, it was taken out of the jurisdiction of Tomi and transferred to that of the Church of Constantinople, based on the provisions of canon 28 of Chalcedon (451).

130 *ACO*, III, p. 65²¹: “Ἰωάννης ἐλέει θεοῦ ἐπίσκοπος Βοσπόρου ὑπέγραψα τῆ ἀναφορᾷ” (‘John by the mercy of God bishop of Bosphorus, I have signed the report’). There are no exceptions from the hierarchical criterion in the list.

131 *ACO*, III, pp. 126¹–127⁴¹; p. 126²⁶: “Ἰωάννου Βοσπόρου” (‘John of Bosphorus’). The status of suffragan bishopric of the see of Bosphorus on 2 May 536 is mainly indicated by the fact that the city is not mentioned with the rank of ‘metropolis’ (μητρόπολις). The second argument is the mention of John after the bishop of Gabala, who had the rank of ‘archbishop or syncellus’ in the patriarchate of Antioch. Within the lists of the synod of 536, the latter is always mentioned at the end of the metropolitans’ group and before that of suffragan bishops. This aspect shows that its rank was considered superior to that of a suffragan bishop and inferior to that of a metropolitan. In the attendance list of 2 May 536, the name of John of Bosphorus is mentioned immediately after that of the hierarch of Gabala. Later, starting with the meeting on 6 May, after the hierarch of Bosphorus had obtained the metropolitan rank, his name was written before that of Gabala in all synodal lists.

132 *ACO*, III, p. 155³.

133 10 May: a hierarchical attendance list, *ACO*, III, pp. 161⁴–163¹⁵; p. 162²⁷: “Ἰωάννου τῆς μητροπόλεως Βοσπόρου” (‘John of the metropolis of Bosphorus’). 21 May: a hierarchical attendance list, *ACO*, III, pp. 169¹⁷–171³²; p. 171¹: “Ἰωάννου τῆς μητροπόλεως Βοσπόρου” (‘John of the metropolis of Bosphorus’). 21 May: a hierarchical list of signatories, in which that of John of Bosphorus appears in the group of metropolitans, *ACO*, III, pp. 182⁶–186²⁵; p. 183³⁵: “Ἰωάννης ἐλέει θεοῦ ἐπίσκοπος Βοσπόρου ὀρίσας ὑπεσημηγάμην” (‘John by the mercy of God bishop of Bosphorus, I have so decreed and signed’). 4 June: a hierarchical attendance list, *ACO*, III, pp. 27¹¹–29¹⁸; p. 27³²: “Ἰωάννου τῆς μητροπόλεως Βοσπόρου” (‘John of the metropolis of Bosphorus’). 4 June: a hierarchical list of signatories, in which that of John of Bosphorus is mentioned in the metropolitans’ group, *ACO*, III, pp. 113¹⁸–119²⁵; p. 115¹⁴: “Ἰωάννης ἐλέει θεοῦ ἐπίσκοπος Βοσπόρου ὀρίσας ὑπεσημηγάμην” (‘John by the mercy of God bishop of Bosphorus, I have so decreed and signed’). Notice that John, even if he had the rank of metropolitan, did not mention his metropolitan title with the signature, probably out of humility.

In *Notitiae episcopatum*, Bosphorus is repeatedly registered with the rank of autocephalous archbishopric (titular metropolis) in the province of Zechia.¹³⁴ As already shown, this ecclesiastical province undoubtedly did not exist in the year 536, Zechia being a pagan kingdom at that time, independent of the Roman Empire. Only a missionary bishopric functioned on its territory (see above). The conclusion of one of the previous analyses was that, most probably, the see of Bosphorus remained within the ecclesiastical province of Scythia also after being raised to the rank of a titular metropolis, together with the see of Chersonesus.¹³⁵

The idea that the see of Bosphorus had the rank of a great metropolis in 536, which has been sustained by Jacques Zeiller and Andreï Vinogradov, is examined below.¹³⁶ According to Zeiller, the suffragan episcopal sees of Bosphorus had been those of Chersonesus and Gothia, to the north of the Black Sea. According to Vinogradov, Bosphorus had held this rank (great metropolis) from 519 (in fact, 518); the bishopric of Phanagoria and later (from the second third of 6th century) also that of the Zechi in Nicopsis were under its jurisdiction.¹³⁷

Mention must be made from the beginning of the fact that, within the synodal list of 518, the signatures of the bishops of Bosphorus and Phanagoria appear in line with those of the suffragan bishops.¹³⁸ This evidence leads to the conclusion that both hierarchs had the rank of ordinary bishops at that time. On the other hand, in the *Notitiae episcopatum* the see of Bosphorus is always registered as an autocephalous archbishopric and, of utmost importance, in the final part of the list, not in a leading position. Moreover, Chersonesus always precedes Bosphorus in *Notitiae*. If Bosphorus had held the rank of great metropolis in 536, its transformation into titular metropolis (autocephalous archbishopric) would have been a demotion. It would be an evolution similar to that of the sees of Odessos and Tomi, at the beginning of the 7th century. Or, what is to be noticed in their case, is the fact that, after their demotion, they received, as a compensation, a leading position (no. 1 and no. 2, respectively) in the list of autocephalous archbishoprics of the Church of Constantinople. Such a compensation cannot be found in the case of the see of Bosphorus, however. This observation shows that it had never held the rank of great metropolis.

134 Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatum* 1.63, p. 206; 2.67, p. 218; 3.83, p. 232; 4.64, p. 250; 5.68, p. 266.

135 See above, subchapter 6.4: 'The see of Chersonesus.'

136 Zeiller, *Les origines*, pp. 411–412; Vinogradov, "Khersones-Kherson," pp. 46–47; Vinogradov, "Some Notes," p. 11.

137 The Home Synod in which Bishop John of Phanagoria participated was held in 518 and not in 519. It seems that Andreï Vinogradov took the wrong dating (519) from Giorgio Fedalto [*Hierarchia Ecclesiastica Orientalis*, 1 (Padova: Edizioni Messaggero, 1988), p. 392].

138 See *ACO*, III, pp. 65²–66³⁴.

Therefore, it only received the rank of titular metropolis (autocephalous archbishopric) in 536. It acquired this rank on the provisions of canon 12 of the Council of Chalcedon, after receiving the status of metropolis to its city of residence.

The lack of any compensation in the list of autocephalous archbishoprics can also be noticed in the case of the see of Chersonesus, which means that it had never held the rank of great metropolis, either. However, its mention before that of Bosphorus in *Notitiae* suggests that it had an honorific primacy as compared to the other.

Summarizing what has been written so far, the following conclusions can be drawn: 1. The bishopric of Bosphorus does not seem to have been integrated into the metropolitan organization system before the year 381; 2. In 381, it was most likely integrated into the newly-created ecclesiastical province of Scythia, as a suffragan of the metropolis of Tomi; 3. In the year 536 (between 2 and 6 May), the see of Bosphorus was raised to the rank of titular metropolis, as a result of granting the status of metropolis to its city of residence. Due to this new rank, Bosphorus was transferred to the direct jurisdiction of the Church of Constantinople. It is difficult to identify its ecclesiastical province from that moment onward; most probably it was also Scythia.

6.6 The See of Phanagoria

Phanagoria was the second big city of the Bosporan Kingdom. It was situated on an island, which is currently part of the Taman Peninsula (see Map 6). The settlement was founded in the middle of the 6th century BC by the Teian colonists.¹³⁹ At the beginning of the 1st century AD, Strabo described Phanagoria as a noteworthy city (‘πόλις ἀξιόλογος’), which had also the rank of metropolis (‘μητρόπολις’) of the Asian Bosporians. On the other side of the Kerch Strait, in Crimea, Panticapaeum/Bosphorus had the status of metropolis of the European Bosporians.¹⁴⁰

139 Gocha R. Tsetskhladze, “Black Sea,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece & Rome*, 1, eds. Michael Gagarin and Elaine Fantham (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 12; Gocha R. Tsetskhladze, “Bosphorus, Kingdom of,” in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece & Rome*, 1, p. 18; Gocha R. Tsetskhladze, “Phanagoria: Metropolis of the Asiatic Bosphorus,” in *Greek Archaeology without Frontiers*, eds. Jan A. Todd et al. (Athens: National Hellenic Research Foundation, 2002), pp. 129–131.

140 Strabo, *Geographica* XI.2.10, 2, ed. Gustav Kramer (Berlin: Nicolai, 1847), p. 433^{8–18}; Strabo, *Geography*, trans., intro., and notes Duane W. Roller (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2015), pp. 478–479.

The history of this city in the 4th–6th centuries is little known. It was part of the Bosphoran Kingdom until the middle of the 4th century. It is difficult to say which was its situation after the dissolution of this state (342). Procopius of Caesarea, who mentions the domination of the Huns over the city of Bosphorus, does not say anything about such a situation in the case of Phanagoria. Moreover, whereas the Byzantine historian asserts that the Bosphorus came under Roman rule ‘not long ago’ (see above), about the neighbouring towns, Phanagoria and Kepoi/Cepoi (Krasnodar Krai, Russia) (see Map 6), he specifies that, like the city of Chersonesus, “they have been subject to the Romans from ancient times (ἐκ παλαιῶν) and even to my day.”¹⁴¹ Even if his words suggest that the Roman domination in Chersonesus, Phanagoria, and Cepoi started at the same time, it is difficult to say if this statement is entirely accurate. It is certain that the beginning of the Roman rule in the two towns of the Taman Peninsula took place prior to the occupation of Bosphorus. The event may have occurred during the reign of Anastasius I (491–518) or even of Zeno (474–491). Under the reign of the latter, the Romans were actively involved in the rebuilding and administrative organization of the city of Chersonesus, which demonstrates the increased interest of Constantinople in the regions to the north of the Black Sea at that time.¹⁴² Moreover, the fact that the city of Bosphorus was under Roman influence again in the middle of the 5th century also shows a historical context favourable to the expansion of Roman rule on the eastern shore of the Kerch Strait, due to the dissolution of Attila’s empire.

Procopius also mentions that “not long ago (οὐ πολλῶ ἔμπροσθεν) [Phanagoria and Cepoi] were captured by some of the neighbouring barbarians and razed to the ground.”¹⁴³ The event seems to have occurred in the first part of Justinian I’s reign, which corresponded to Gordas’ conversion to Christianity in Constantinople. He was the leader of the Huns located to the north of the Black Sea. According to the testimony of John Malalas (c.491–578) and John of Ephesus (c.507–588), Gordas was killed by his people upon his return home, instigated by pagan priests. At the same time, the revolted Huns besieged Bosphorus, slaughtering the soldiers of the Roman garrison located there.¹⁴⁴ The towns of Cepoi and Phanagoria may have been destroyed in this historical context. There are different dates attributed to these events. According to John

141 Procopius Caesariensis, *De bellis* VIII.5.27–28, p. 508^{4–9}; trans., p. 97.

142 Vasiliev, *The Goths*, pp. 43–47; Alexander I. Aibabin, “Written Sources on Byzantine Ports in the Crimea from the Fourth to Seventh Century,” *Istoricheskie nauki* 36 (2013), no. 2, p. 157.

143 Procopius Caesariensis, *De bellis* VIII.5.28, p. 508^{9–11}; trans., p. 97.

144 Aibabin, “Written Sources,” pp. 158–161.

Malalas, they occurred in the year 527, whereas according to John of Ephesus, they took place in 534.

Phanagoria is attested in documents also as an episcopal centre. The moment of the organization of its see is not known, however. As already shown, it is unlikely that it existed before the dissolution of the Bosporan Kingdom. Closer to the truth seems the hypothesis that it may have been founded during Roman rule, maybe based on Zeno's law of 474–484.¹⁴⁵ The only bishop of Phanagoria known by his name is John. He participated and signed the decisions of the Home Synod of 518 (20 July), without indicating the ecclesiastical province to which his see belonged: “Ἰωάννης ἐλέει θεοῦ ἐπίσκοπος Φαναγορέως ὑπέγραψα τῇ ἀναφορᾷ” (“John by the mercy of God bishop of Phanagoria, I have signed the report”).¹⁴⁶ It is certain that Phanagoria had the rank of ordinary bishopric, and not of metropolis. This is shown by the position of John's signature among those of the suffragan bishops.

There is no consensus among scholars regarding the canonical dependence of this bishopric. According to Jacques Zeiller, the bishoprics of Phanagoria, Zechia, and Nicopsis had been the same see, which, due to political and military conflicts and to the frequent border changes in that part of the Byzantine Empire, had to find another residence many times. Sometimes it even stopped existing, being re-established afterward.¹⁴⁷ Rudolf Schieffer placed Phanagoria in the Bosporan Kingdom (*regni Bosporani*), and Andrei Vinogradov in a large ecclesiastical province led by the metropolis of Bosporus.¹⁴⁸

A close analysis of all the possibilities can clarify this issue. Phanagoria was certainly under Roman rule at that time (518), without being ascribed to any of the Roman provinces. From this point of view, its situation was similar to that of the cities Chersonesus in Crimea, as well as Theodosiopolis and Leontopolis in Inner Armenia.¹⁴⁹ Within the church organizational plan, their sees were integrated into ecclesiastical provinces on the territory of the Roman Empire: Scythia and Armenia Prima (later Cappadocia Prima), respectively. The bishopric of Bosporus and those of Satrapiae were associated to the Roman ecclesiastical provinces (Scythia and Mesopotamia, respectively) even before their occupation by the Roman Empire. Therefore, the see of Phanagoria may have been integrated into the Roman ecclesiastical structures, as well. Still, there is

145 See above, subchapter 3.1: ‘Justinian I's code and Zeno's law.’

146 ACO, III, p. 66⁶.

147 Zeiller, *Les origines*, p. 416.

148 ACO, IV/3.3, ed. Johannes Straub (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1984), p. 251; Vinogradov, “Khersones-Kherson,” pp. 46–47; Vinogradov, “Some Notes,” p. 11.

149 On Theodosiopolis and Leontopolis, see subchapter 2.4: ‘The church organization of Satrapiae and Inner Armenia (Great Armenia).’

no clear documentary reference able to establish the ecclesiastical province to which it belonged. The name of Phanagoria does not appear in any of *Notitiae episcopatum*, nor in *Encyclia* (457–458).

It is unlikely for the see of Phanagoria to have been a suffragan of the metropolis of Neocaesarea in Pontus Polemoniaca, like those of Pityus and Sebastopolis. In *Novella* 28 (16 July 535), Justinian I mentioned that the forts of Pityus and Sebastopolis were part of the province of Pontus Polemoniaca, without mentioning Phanagoria.¹⁵⁰ Given that it was not mentioned proves that it was not part of this civil province and, most probably, nor of the homonymous ecclesiastical one.

The direct dependence on the Church of Constantinople is excluded, as Phanagoria was not a bishopric of a barbarian people and did not have the rank of great or titular metropolis. As already shown, the documents of the Home Synod of 518 prove that it had the status of an ordinary bishopric at that time.

That it may have been a suffragan of the see of Chersonesus or of that of Bosphorus is also excluded, as these sees never had the rank of great metropoleis (metropoleis with suffragan bishoprics) (see above). Moreover, in 518, within the documents of the same Home Synod, the see of Bosphorus itself is attested with the rank of ordinary bishopric.

An indication to establish the canonical dependence of this bishopric is provided by Procopius of Caesarea's reference to the geographical position of Cepoi and Phanagoria. In the paragraph dedicated to these towns, the Byzantine historian mentioned Bosphorus first, then Chersonesus, and finally Cepoi and Phanagoria, which he placed near Chersonesus: "and two other towns near Cherson (*ἀγχού Χερσῶνος*), named Cēpi and Phanaguris."¹⁵¹ The location is incorrect, as the two towns were closer to Bosphorus than to Chersonesus. In the same context, Procopius made a distinction between the beginning of the Roman rule in Bosphorus, on the one hand, "which became subject to the Romans not long ago (*οὐ πολλῷ πρότερον*)," and in Chersonesus, Phanagoria, and Cepoi, on the other hand, which "have been subject to the Romans from ancient times (*ἐκ παλαιῶν*)."¹⁵² These two aspects (the geographical metathesis and the chronology of the settlements' occupation in the region) support the hypothesis that Chersonesus, Phanagoria, and Cepoi had had a similar situation within the plan of the Roman administrative organization in the region for a long time (until the dissolution of the last two, during the reign

¹⁵⁰ *CIC*, 3, pp. 212–218; trans. Scott.

¹⁵¹ Procopius Caesariensis, *De bellis* VIII.5.28, p. 508⁶⁻⁸; trans., p. 97.

¹⁵² Procopius Caesariensis, *De bellis* VIII.5.26–28, p. 508¹⁻⁸; trans., p. 97.

of Justinian I). In this case, their situation must have been similar within the plan of church organization, as well. Therefore, like the see of Chersonesus, that of Phanagoria may have been a suffragan of the metropolis of Tomi. This hypothesis is also indirectly sustained by the exclusion of the other possibilities regarding the canonical dependence of the see of Phanagoria (direct suffragan of the Church of Constantinople, of the metropolis of Neocaesarea, or of the bishoprics of Chersonesus and Bosporus).

Concerning the canonical dependence of the see of Phanagoria, it must be noticed also that the only hierarch known from there, John, was present in Constantinople in 518, at the time when the Scythian monks were in conflict with Paternus of Tomi and the rest of the hierarchs of their province, which they accused of heresy.¹⁵³ At the same time, John of Bosporus and John of Odessos are attested in Constantinople. The latter is the only hierarch of Odessos attested at a synod at the time when this see had the rank of ordinary bishopric. It is not excluded that the three suffragans in Scythia may have been called at Constantinople to respond to the accusation of heresy launched by the Scythian monks.

It is difficult to establish when the bishopric of Phanagoria was founded, as there is no clear documentary evidence for its establishment. The transfer of the see of Odessos under the jurisdiction of Tomi in 381 suggests that the bishopric of Phanagoria did not yet exist at that time. Otherwise, the three bishoprics to the north of the Black Sea (Chersonesus, Bosporus, and Phanagoria) would have been enough for the canonical functioning of the newly-created ecclesiastical province, and the subordination of Odessos to Tomi would not have been necessary anymore. In this case, Phanagoria must have become an episcopal centre sometime after 381. Then, given the early passing of this city under Roman rule, the creation of the episcopal see there must have occurred at the latest during Zeno's reign, when the law issued between 474 and 484 imposed the existence of bishops in all the urban settlements on the territory of the Roman Empire. In what concerns its dissolution, it must have been determined by the destruction of its city of residence, at the beginning of the reign of Justinian I (in 527 or 534, at the latest). In this case, in the year 536, when the episcopal network on the northern and western coast of the Black Sea was reorganized, the bishopric of Phanagoria no longer existed.

It is not excluded for an episcopal see to have functioned also at Cepoi, the town situated in the close neighbourhood of Phanagoria. As already shown, Procopius of Caesarea mentions the two settlements together, using the term

153 On this issue, see below, subchapter 12.3.1: 'The involvement of the Scythian monks in the theological debates of the 5th–6th centuries.'

'town' (πόλισμα') for both. Therefore, the application of Zeno's law of 474–484 also in the case of this settlement seems justified. If it had really existed, the bishopric of Cepoi must have been in a situation similar to that of Phanagoria within the church organizational plan, namely a suffragan of Tomi. The future will reveal if the archaeological research at Cepoi can confirm the existence of an episcopal see at that location.

6.7 The Bishopric of the Goths

A bishopric of the Catholic Goths is attested through documents in the northern region of the Black Sea during the 4th–6th centuries.¹⁵⁴ The first hierarch there known by name is Unilas. He was ordained in Constantinople by John Chrysostom (398–404), probably in the last years of the 4th century (c.398–400). After Unilas' death, which may have occurred in the year 404, a delegation of the Goths in Crimea came to Constantinople, asking for the ordination of a new hierarch.¹⁵⁵ Even if there is no information preserved referring to the end of this approach, one of John Chrysostom's successors in the episcopal see, Arsacius (404–405) or Atticus (406–425), supposedly satisfied the Goths' request.

A similar event occurred in the year 548, during the reign of Justinian I. Procopius of Caesarea says that a delegation of the Tetraxite (Trapezite) Goths dislocated by the Huns from Crimea to Taman Peninsula, came to Constantinople and asked the emperor to give them a new hierarch, as their bishop had died. Procopius' account shows that their demand was met.¹⁵⁶

The two episodes clear up the situation of the Catholic Goths' bishopric to the north of the Black Sea. The documentary information exposed shows that at least three of the hierarchs of the North-Pontic Goths (Unilas, his follower, and the bishop during Justinian I's reign) were ordained in Constantinople. Therefore, the provisions of canon 2 of the First Council of Constantinople

154 For the history of this bishopric, see also Vasiliev, *The Goths*, pp. 32–38; Emilian Popescu, "Der heilige Johannes Chrysostomus und die Mission auf der Krim und an der unteren Donau," in Emilian Popescu, *Christianitas daco-romana. Florilegium studiorum* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1994), pp. 187–199; Sergey V. Yartsev, Viktor G. Zubarev, and Sergey L. Smekalov, "The Christian Goths at the Bosphorus in the 4th and 5th Centuries AD," *The Journal of Social Sciences Research* 14 (2018), no. 3, pp. 374–379.

155 St. Ioannes Chrysostomus, *Epistulae* IX (XIV), in *Lettres a Olympias*, ed. Anne-Marie Malingrey, (Sources Chrétiennes) 13 (Paris: Cerf, 1947), p. 151 (5b); John Chrysostom, *Letters to Olympias*, trans. W.R.W. Stephens, ed. D.P. Curtin (Philadelphia, PA: Dalcassian Publishing Co., 2018), p. 35.

156 Procopius Caesariensis, *De bellis* VIII.4.12, p. 502^{13–18}; trans., p. 87.

(381) and those (much clearer) of canon 28 of the Council of Chalcedon (451) show that the status of this see was that of a bishopric for a barbarian people.¹⁵⁷ In these conditions, it was not affiliated to any of the ecclesiastical provinces of the Roman Empire, but depended directly on the Church of Constantinople.

Procopius' account is important also for the fact that it shows that the bishopric of the Tetraxite (Trapezite) Goths was different from that of Bosphorus. As already shown, most of the North-Pontic Goths no longer lived in Crimea in the middle of the 5th century, but in the Taman Peninsula. Most probably it was also there, in their midst, where the hierarch who spiritually guided them resided. Moreover, Procopius makes a clear distinction between the Tetraxite (Trapezite) Goths in Taman Peninsula and the city of Bosphorus.¹⁵⁸ These observations show that their bishoprics (that of the Goths and that of Bosphorus) were different.

Finally, the excerpt from Procopius shows that the Huns did not prevent church relations between the sees in the cities and regions within their sphere of influence and those of the Roman Empire. The delegation of the Goths in 548 exposed publicly, without fear, their demand regarding the ordination of a new bishop. Only political and military aspects were discussed secretly by the delegation of the Goths with Emperor Justinian I.¹⁵⁹ This observation supports the hypothesis of the integration and remaining of the bishopric of Bosphorus within the ecclesiastical structures of the Roman Empire, even during the period when the city was in the Huns' sphere of influence.

6.8 Conclusions

The following conclusions can be drawn from the analysis above:

1. The episcopal network on the western and northern coast of the Black Sea was complex. There were three types of bishoprics there between the 4th and 6th centuries: a. That of the sees integrated into the ecclesiastical provinces of the Roman Empire [Pityus and Sebastopolis (Pontus Polemoniacus), and Chersonesus, Bosphorus, and Phanagoria (Scythia)]; b. That of the barbarian people's sees (the bishoprics of the Goths, of the Abasgi, and of the Zechi); c. That of the bishoprics (Ziganis, Phasis, and Petra) organized within a vassal state of the Roman Empire (Lazica). The full crystallization of these church structures occurred toward the end

¹⁵⁷ Tanner, *Decrees*, pp. 31–32 and 99–100.

¹⁵⁸ See Procopius Caesariensis, *De bellis* VIII.5, pp. 503⁶–509⁷; trans., pp. 87–99.

¹⁵⁹ Procopius Caesariensis, *De bellis* VIII.4.13, pp. 502²⁰–503⁴; trans., p. 87.

- of the 4th—the beginning of the 5th century, after the proclamation of Christianity as an official religion of the Roman Empire.
2. The regional church organization throughout the 4th century is less clear. The episcopal sees of Chersonesus and Bosphorus were most probably out of the metropolitan organization system, which was already functioning at that time on the territory of the Roman Empire. Unclear is also the canonical dependence of the bishoprics of Ziganis, Phasis, and Petra. It is not excluded that they may have been suffragan of the metropolis of Neocaesarea in Pontus Polemoniacus at that time. It is certain that the bishopric of Pityus was part of the last-mentioned province. The bishopric of Sebastopolis seems to have been in a similar situation.
 3. Major changes in the regional church organization took place in the 6th century, during the reign of Justinian I. In the year 536, the see of Bosphorus and, most probably, that of Chersonesus as well, were raised to the rank of titular metropoleis (autocephalous archbishoprics), becoming direct suffragans of the Church in Constantinople. Most probably, they continued to be part of the ecclesiastical province of Scythia also after that moment. Moreover, following the occupation of the Kingdom of Lazica by the Romans, the episcopal network there seems to have been turned into an ecclesiastical province and transferred to the jurisdiction of the Church in the imperial capital. Also during the reign of Justinian I, certain episcopal centres were organized for the barbarian peoples in the process of Christianization (the Abasgi and the Zechi) on the eastern coast of the Black Sea. They were under the jurisdiction of Constantinople as well. The bishopric of Apsilia was also transferred to the jurisdiction of the Church in the imperial capital, after the occupation of this kingdom by the Romans during the reign of Justinian I. Before (if it existed), it must have been under the control of the Church in Lazica.

PART 2

Monasticism in Roman Scythia
(4th–7th Centuries AD)



Studies on Monasticism in Roman Scythia

Monastic life in Roman Scythia drew scholarly attention mainly due to John Cassian (†c.435), Dionysius Exiguus (†c.530), and the Scythian monks (6th century). The first one presented in his writings the teaching and ascetic experience of the monks in the Egyptian desert from the end of the 4th century, thus contributing to the formation of Western monasticism. Scythian monks, among whom can be included Dionysius Exiguus, lived a century later and were involved in the theological debates that preceded the Second Council of Constantinople (553). Other scholars were interested in the origins of ascetic life in the province, in the impact of the Audian monks (exiled in Roman Scythia) on monastic life there, in the contribution of Theotimus I [a metropolitan monk of Tomi (c.390–c.407)] to the reorganization of monastic life, and in the consequences of the Nestorian crisis on the local church doctrine at the time of Timothy of Tomi (c.431). Special attention has been given in recent years to the research of Late Roman and early Byzantine monastic complexes identified in the region.

Due to all of these contributions, the bibliography on monastic life in Roman Scythia is very rich. Nevertheless, even so (as expected, given the diversity of the issues related to this topic), there are still many uncertainties.

The following pages mention the names and (briefly) the contributions of some of those who, over time, treated in their studies the life, writings, and teaching of monastic personalities in Roman Scythia or various aspects related to monastic life in the province. Mention will be made also of some of the issues treated thoroughly in this second part of the present book, with each scholar's opinions exposed within every chapter.

The case of the Scythian monks in the first half of the 6th century is complex and, at the same time, extremely important for the understanding of the evolution of monastic life in Roman Scythia over the 5th–6th centuries. Cardinal Caesar Baronius is the first who wrote about them [*Ecclesiastical Annals* (1588)], when he presented Vitalian's revolt against Emperor Anastasius I (491–518) and the theological debates during the reign of Emperor Justin I (518–527).¹ Even if Baronius' opinion on the Scythian

¹ Caesar Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, 9 (Barri-Ducis, Ludovicus Guerin, Eques Ordinis S. Silvestri, 1867), esp. pp. 233–284.

monks was critical, especially due to their intransigent attitude toward Pope Hormisdas (514–523), his work contributed to highlighting these theologians' cases. More than a century later, another cardinal, Enrico Noris, published the first extended chapters dedicated to these Scythian theologians, contributing to the rehabilitation of the orthodoxy of their teaching.² Starting from the end of the 19th century, the Scythians' case began to be presented in articles published in various encyclopedias and dictionaries (such as "Theopashiten" by Albert Hauck or "Maxentius Joannes" by T.W. Davids), as well as extended works, dedicated to Emperor Justinian I's religious politics (such as *Die Religions-Politik: Kaiser Justinians I* by August Knecht and *Justinien et la civilisation byzantine au VI-e siècle* by Charles Diehl) or in dogmatic theology treatises (such as *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte* by Adolf Harnack).³ New debate topics about the Scythian monks have been approached since the end of the 19th century. Friedrich Loofs identified Leotius of Byzantium with the homonymous Scythian monk, which was an idea accepted by Adolf Harnack and Otto Bardenhewer, but rejected by Wilhelm Rügamer, Venance Grumel, Eduard Schwartz, and, decisively, by Berthold Altaner.⁴ Even if Loofs' idea did not impose itself in the academic environment, its analysis has the merit of having contributed to a better understanding of certain aspects related to the Scythian monks' actions and to the confirmation of their Christological orthodoxy teachings. In the same period, the orthodoxy of the theological formula

2 Enrico Noris, *Historia Pelagiana et dissertatio de Synodo v. Oecumenica*, lib. II, c.18–20 (Leuven: apud Henricum Schelte, 1702), pp. 192–204, and *Dissertationes historicae* 1–2, pp. 3–67.

3 Albert Hauck, "Theopashiten," in *Realenzyklopädie für protestantische Theologie und Kirche*, 15, eds. Johann Jakob Herzog, Gustav Leopold Plitt, and Albert Hauck, 2nd ed. (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1885), pp. 534–536; T.W. Davids, "Maxentius Joannes," in *A Dictionary of Christian Biography, Literature, Sects and Doctrines*, 3, eds. William Smith and Henry Wace (London: Murray, 1882), pp. 865–868; August Knecht, *Die Religions-Politik: Kaiser Justinians I. Eine kirchengeschichtliche Studie* (Würzburg: A. Göbel, 1896); Charles Diehl, *Justinien et la civilisation byzantine au VI-e siècle* (Paris: Leroux, 1901); Adolf Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, 2 (Freiburg: Mohr, 1894), pp. 380–384.

4 Friedrich Loofs, *Leontius von Byzanz und die gleichnamigen Schriftsteller der griechischen Kirche*, 1 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1887), pp. 228–261; Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, pp. 381–384; Otto Bardenhewer, *Patrologie*, 3rd ed. (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1910), p. 472; Wilhelm Rügamer, *Leontius Von Byzanz; ein Polemiker aus dem. zeitalter Justinians* (Würzburg: A. Göbel, 1894), pp. 54–56; Venance Grumel, "Léonce de Byzance," in *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, 9/1, eds. Alfred Vacant, Eugène Mangenot, and Émile Amann (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1926), col. 400–401; Eduard Schwartz, "Praefatio," in *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum* (hereafter cited as *ACO*), IV/2, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1914), p. XII; Berthold Altaner, "Der griechische Theologe Leontius und Leontius der skytische Mönch," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 127 (1947), pp. 147–165.

promoted by them (“*unus de sancta trinitate passus/crucifixus est carne*,” “One of the Holy Trinity suffered/was crucified in the flesh”) was firmly supported by Adolf Harnack.⁵ At the same time, Dionysius Exiguus’ biography and work were treated by Friedrich Maassen and Jean Baptiste François Pitra.⁶

In 1914, Eduard Schwartz published the critical edition of the extant writings of Scythian monks [*ACO* (vol. IV/2)], preceded by a study dedicated to them (*Praefatio*).⁷ At the end of the preface, he edited the critical text of one of the letters addressed by Dionysius Exiguus to the Scythian monks.⁸ This source is important as it exposes aspects related to the situation of monastic life in Roman Scythia in the second half of the 5th century.⁹

After World War I, Eduard Schwartz published in *ACO* (vol. I/5.1) his definitive edition of the *Collectio Palatina*, a collection of writings mainly devoted to the Pelagian and Nestorian heresies.¹⁰ In its content, a few sermons of Metropolitan John of Tomi are also mentioned. He was identified by Eduard Schwartz with John Maxentius, the Scythian monks leader.¹¹ Later, William C. Bark brought additional arguments in favour of this identification and of the dating of *Collectio Palatina* to the middle of the 6th century.¹² In another volume of the collection *ACO* (I/5.2), Eduard Schwartz published *Collectio Sichardiana*, which was compiled from one or two dossiers composed during or shortly after the Theopaschite Controversy, including Latin translations by Dionysius Exiguus of Synodical Letter of Cyril and letters of Theodoret and Cyril.¹³ In the following decade, Vasile Sibiescu, Émile Amann, B. Nisters, and Viktor Schurr also published studies valuable to the understanding of these monks’ case and the theological debates in which they were involved.¹⁴

5 Harnack, *Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte*, pp. 380–381.

6 Friedrich Maassen, *Geschichte der Quellen und der Literatur des canonischen Rechts*, 1 (Gratz: Leuschner & Lubensky, 1870), pp. 422–440; Jean Baptiste François Pitra, *Analecta novissima spicilegii solesmensis, altera continuatio*, 1 (Paris: Roger et Chernowitz Bibliopolis, 1885), pp. 36–43.

7 Schwartz, “Praefatio,” pp. I–XIII and 3–62.

8 Schwartz, “Praefatio,” pp. XI–XII.

9 See below, subchapter 12.2.1: ‘The preface to the Latin translation of Cyril of Alexandria’s letters (nos. 45 and 46) to Succe(n)ssus.’

10 *ACO*, I/5.1, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1924–1925).

11 *ACO*, I/5.1, p. VIII.

12 William C. Bark, “John Maxentius and the *Collectio Palatina*,” *Harvard Theological Review* 36 (1943), no. 2, pp. 93–107.

13 *ACO*, I/5.2, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1924–1925).

14 Vasile Sibiescu, “Călugării sciți” [The Scythian Monks], *Revista Teologică* 26 (1936), 5–6, pp. 182–205; Émile Amann, “Scythes (Moines),” in *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, 14/2, eds. Alfred Vacant, Eugène Mangelot, and Émile Amann (Paris: Letouzey et Ané,

In the middle of the last century, Berthold Altaner published “Zum Schrifttum der «skythischen» (gotischen) Mönche. Quellenkritische literarhistorische Untersuchungen,” dedicated to the writings and text collections elaborated and compiled, respectively, by the Scythian monks.¹⁵ Subsequently, in *Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina* collection were edited the critical edition of Dionysius Exiguus’ introductions to his translations into Latin (vol. 85) and the Scythian monks’ writings (vol. 85A), by Salvator Gennaro and François Glorie, respectively.¹⁶ The latter’s volume is preceded by a well-documented study on the Scythian monks’ activity and identity. Moreover, important information on Dionysius Exiguus’ biography and work can be found in the study dedicated to him by M. Mähler.¹⁷

In other books, published by several Romanian scholars (Aloisie-Ludovic Tăutu, Ioan G. Coman, Dumitru Stăniloae, Gheorghe Drăgulin, Nicolae Dură) and dedicated to the monks in Roman Scythia, issue of monastic life in the province during Late Antiquity was also approached. Aloisie-Ludovic Tăutu is the author of a well-documented study on Dionysius Exiguus.¹⁸ Ioan G. Coman published two studies regarding the life and activity of John Cassian and Dionysius Exiguus, where he also presented the cultural context and the situation of monastic life in Roman Scythia in their time.¹⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae

1941), col. 1746–1753; B. Nisters, “Die Collectio Palatina,” *Theologische Quartalschrift* 113 (1932), nos. 1–2, pp. 119–137; Viktor Schurr, *Die Trinitätslehre des Boethius im Lichte der “skythischen Kontroversen,”* (Forschungen zur christlichen Literatur und Dogmengeschichte) 18/1 (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1935).

- 15 Berthold Altaner, “Zum Schrifttum der «skythischen» (gotischen) Mönche. Quellenkritische literarhistorische Untersuchungen,” *Historisches Jahrbuch* 72 (1953), pp. 568–580.
- 16 Salvator Gennaro, ed., *Scriptores Illyrici minores: Asterius, Dionisius Exiguus, «Exempla sanctorum patrum,» Trifolius, «Confessio» sive «Formula libelli fidei,»* (Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina) 85 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1972); François Glorie, ed., *Maxentii aliorumque scytharum monachorum necnon Ioannis Tomitanae urbis episcopi opuscula,* (Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina) 85A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1978).
- 17 M. Mähler, “Denis le Petit, traducteur de la Vie de saint Pachôme,” in *La Vie latine de saint Pachôme traduite du grec par Denys le Petit*, ed. Henri Van Cranenburgh, (Subsidia Hagiographica) 46 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1969), pp. 28–48.
- 18 Aloisie-Ludovic Tăutu, *Dionisie Românul: o podoabă a Bisericii noastre strămoșești* [Dionysius the Romanian: An Ornament of Our Ancestral Church], 2nd ed. (Rome: Tipografia Poliglotă Gregoriană, 1967).
- 19 Ioan G. Coman, “Le patrimoine de l’oecuménisme chrétien du quatrième au cinquième siècles en Scythie-Mineure (Dobruđja),” *Contacts* 22 (1970), no. 69, pp. 61–85; Ioan G. Coman, “Les ‘Scythes’ Jean Cassien et Denys le Petit et leurs relations avec le monde méditerranéen,” *Kleronomia* 7 (1975), pp. 27–46.

wrote an extensive study dedicated to the Scythian monks in the 6th century, in which he exposed their actions in favour of their theological formula and analyzed their Christological teaching (but not the Soteriological one). Gheorghe Drăgulin and Nicolae Dură concentrated on Dionysius Exiguus' work and on his relations with his fellow-countrymen.²⁰ At the same time, Drăgulin reiterated the idea of Dionysius Exiguus' identification with Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (previously considered by Wilhelm Maria Peitz), without being able to support it with convincing arguments, however.²¹

The Scythian monks' actions and teaching were analyzed also in the studies signed by W.H.C. Frend,²² John Anthony McGuckin,²³ Aloys Grillmeier,²⁴

20 Dumitru Stăniloae, "Scrieri ale «călugărilor sciți daco-romani» din secolul al VI-lea (519–520)" [Writings of «Daco-Roman Scythian Monks» from the 6th Century (519–520)], *Mitropolia Olteniei* 37 (1985), nos. 3–4, pp. 199–254; nos. 5–6, pp. 391–440; nos. 9–10, pp. 680–707; Gheorghe I. Drăgulin, "Cuviosul Dionisie Smeritul sau Exiguul: Două Epistole despre problemele datei Paștelui și «Elementele» calculului calendaristic și pascal" [The Pious Dionysius the Humble or Exiguus: Two Letters on the Issue of the Date of Easter and the «Elements» of the Calendar and Easter Calculation], *Mitropolia Olteniei* 39 (1987), no. 1, pp. 27–70; Gheorghe I. Drăgulin, "Ieromonahul Dionisie Smeritul «Exiguul» sau cel mic. Încercare de întregire bio-bibliografică" [Hieromonk Dionysius the Humble, «Exiguus» or the Little One. A Bio-Bibliographic Completion Attempt], *Studii Teologice* 37 (1985), nos. 7–8, pp. 521–539; Gheorghe I. Drăgulin, "Un fiu de mare faimă al Arhiepiscopiei Tomisului din veacul al VI-lea la Roma" [A Famous Son of the Archbishopric of Tomi in the 6th Century in Rome], *Glasul Bisericii* 45 (1986), no. 3, pp. 62–79; Gheorghe I. Drăgulin, "Prefetele cuviosului Dionisie Smeritul sau Exiguul la unele traduceri în limba latină" [The Prefaces of the Pious Dionysius the Humble or Exiguus in Some Latin Translations], *Mitropolia Olteniei* 38 (1986), no. 2, pp. 76–125; Gheorghe I. Drăgulin and Augusta Drăgulin, "Cercetări asupra operei lui Dionisie Exiguul și îndeosebi asupra celei necunoscute până acum" [Research on the Work of Dionysius Exiguus and Especially on the Hitherto Unknown], *Mitropolia Olteniei* 40 (1988), no. 5, pp. 24–68; Nicolae Dură, "Denys Exiguus (465–550). Précisions et correctifs concernant sa vie et son oeuvre," *Revista española de derecho canónico Salamanca* 50 (1993), pp. 279–290.

21 Gheorghe I. Drăgulin, *Sfântul Dionisie Smeritul și Areopagitul, părintele erei creștine: (faprox. 555)* [Saint Dionysius the Humble and the Areopagite, the Father of the Christian Era: (f.c.555)] (Bucharest: Proxima, 2008).

22 W.H.C. Frend, *The Rise of the Monophysite Movement: Chapters in the History of the Church in the Fifth and Sixth Centuries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972).

23 John Anthony McGuckin, "The 'Theopaschite Confession' (Text and Historical Context): A Study in the Cyrilline Re-interpretation of Chalcedon," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 35 (1984), no. 2, pp. 239–255.

24 Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 2/2, trans. John Cawte and Pauline Allen (Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1995), pp. 317–338.

Florian Duță,²⁵ Matthew Joseph Pereira,²⁶ and Dana Iuliana Viezure.²⁷ The first (W.H.C. Frend) supposes that the actions of the monks in Roman Scythia were carried out for political reasons, while John Anthony McGuckin argues that the Scythian theological formula represents an attempt to reconcile the decisions of Chalcedon with Cyrillian Christology. Aloys Grillmeier reveals the contribution of the Scythian monks to the understanding of the theological terminology (*persona/subsistentia* and *substantia*) and Florian Duță proposes to consider the Scythian theological formula as theanthropaschite (instead of theopaschite), a term that correctly reflects its meaning and reveals its fully orthodox character.²⁸ Dana Iuliana Viezure proves that the theopaschism was permanently a subject of interest after the Council of Chalcedon (throughout the second half of the 5th century and the first decades of the following one), an aspect shown also (as will be seen in the content of this book) by the analysis of the information on the situation in Roman Scythia at that time.²⁹ Quite recently (2017), Dominic Moreau published a prosopography of the Scythian monks in the first half of the 6th century in which he affirms the existence of two Scythian monks named Maxentius [Maxentius (Exiguus) and John (Maxentius), the successor of the first one to lead the Scythian monks].³⁰

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- 25 Florian Duță, *Les théologiens scythes de 440 à 553. La formule théoanthropaschite (théo-sarkopaschite)* [Ph.D. thesis] (Université des sciences humaines de Strasbourg, 1998), and also: Florian Duță, "Nouvelles considérations sur l'identité des théologiens scythes « Jean, évêque de Tomis »,» *Revue de droit canonique* 48 (1998), no. 1, pp. 137–161; Florian Duță, "Des précisions sur la biographie de Denys le Petit," *Revue de droit canonique* 49 (1999), no. 1, pp. 279–296; Florian Duță, "Une rectification terminologique (la formule théoanthropaschite ou théosarkopaschite et non théopaschite) et une distinction entre théoanthropaschitisme et théopaschitisme," *Theologia. Examēniaion epistēmōnikon periodikon* 71 (2000), no. 2, pp. 495–505.
- 26 Matthew Joseph Pereira, *Reception, Interpretation and Doctrine in the Sixth Century: John Maxentius and the Scythian Monks* [Ph.D. thesis] (Columbia University, 2015); Matthew Joseph Pereira, "John Maxentius and the Scythian Monks," in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy: Philosophy between 500 and 1500*, ed. Henrik Lagerlund (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), pp. 963–971.
- 27 Dana Iuliana Viezure, *Verbum crucis, virtus dei: A Study of Theopaschism from the Council of Chalcedon (451) to the Age of Justinian* [Ph.D. thesis] (Centre for Medieval Studies) (University of Toronto, 2009); Dana Iuliana Viezure, "On the Origins of the *Unus de Trinitate* Controversy," *Annual of Medieval Studies at Central European University Budapest* 10 (2004), pp. 9–19.
- 28 The unsuitable use of the term 'theopaschite' to characterize the Scythian monks' theological formula had been previously noted also by John Anthony McGuckin ("The 'Theopaschite Confession,'" p. 239).
- 29 See below, subchapter 12.1: 'Archimandrite Carosus.'
- 30 Dominic Moreau, "Les moines scythes néo-chalcédoniens (de Zaldapa?). Étude préliminaire à une prosopographie chrétienne du Diocèse des Thraces," *Dobrudzha* 32 (2017), pp. 187–202.

In other works, authored by Rebecca Harden Weaver,³¹ David R. Maxwell,³² Francis X. Gumerlock,³³ Donald Fairbairn,³⁴ and Joseph Pereira,³⁵ John Cassian' and/or the Scythian monks' soteriological teaching were analyzed, as well as the relation between the latter and the Christological one. If John Cassian is included by Weaver in the category of the Semi-Pelagian theologians,³⁶ an idea regarded with reserve in other studies,³⁷ the latter ones (the Scythian monks of the 6th c.) are considered with good reason to have promoted Augustine of Hippo's predestination teaching. Based on the latter aspect, the present book identifies the major changes that took place in the Church of Roman Scythia after the First Council of Ephesus (431)³⁸ and evaluates the impact of John Cassian's writings on the theological teaching and spirituality of the province over the 5th–6th centuries.³⁹

In parallel, researches dedicated to the history of monasticism in Scythia have diversified, especially due to the work of Romanian and Bulgarian scholars. Ioan G. Coman dedicated one of his studies to the activity of Theotimus

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- 31 Rebecca Harden Weaver, *Divine Grace and Human Agency. A Study of the Semi-Pelagian Controversy*, 2nd ed., (North American Patristic Society. Patristic Monograph Series) 15 (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1998).
- 32 David R. Maxwell, "Christology and Grace in the Sixth Century Latin West: The Theopaschite Controversy" [Ph.D. thesis] (University of Notre Dame, 2003).
- 33 Francis X. Gumerlock, *Fulgentius of Ruspe on the Saving Will of God: The Development of a Sixth-Century African Bishop's Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:4 during the Semi-Pelagian Controversy* (Lewiston, N.Y.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2009).
- 34 Donald Fairbairn, *Grace and Christology in the Early Church* (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2003); Donald Fairbairn, "Introduction," in Rob Roy McGregor and Donald Fairbairn, trans., *Fulgentius of Ruspe and the Scythian Monks: Correspondence on Christology and Grace* (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013), pp. 3–22.
- 35 Matthew Joseph Pereira, "From Augustine to the Scythian Monks: Social Memory and the Doctrine of Predestination," in *Studia Patristica. LXX. Papers Presented at the Sixteenth International Conference on Patristic Studies Held in Oxford 2011*, 18, ed. Markus Vinzent (Leuven/Paris/Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2013), pp. 671–683; Matthew Joseph Pereira, "Augustine, Pelagius, and the Southern Gallic Tradition: Faustus of Riez's *De gratia Dei*," in *Grace for Grace: The Debates after Augustine and Pelagius*, ed. Alexander Y. Hwang (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2014), pp. 180–207.
- 36 Weaver, *Divine Grace and Human Agency*, pp. 121–131.
- 37 See Augustine M.C. Casiday, *Tradition and Theology in St. John Cassian*, (Oxford Early Christian Studies) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 264–266; Irena Backus and Goudriaan Aza, "'Semipelagianism': The Origins of the Term and Its Passage into the History of Heresy," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 65 (2014), no. 1, pp. 25–46; Jennifer Chaloner, "Orthodoxy, Heresy, or the Grey in Between? John Cassian and Early Medieval Theology," *STAAAR* 6 (2015), pp. 9–14.
- 38 See below, subchapter 12.3.4: 'The doctrine of salvation of the Scythian monks.'
- 39 See below, subchapter 11.2: 'The influence of John Cassian's teachings on Scythian monasticism in Late Antiquity.'

of Tomi, the first metropolitan of Tomi known to have come from among the local monks.⁴⁰ The impact of the latter's personality and of the Audian monks over the monastic life in the Istro-Pontic territory was analyzed by Ioan Rămureanu.⁴¹ Another Romanian scholar, Nestor Vornicescu, treated, along with the case of John Cassian and of the Scythian monks, also that of martyrs Epictet and Astion, the first ascetics attested by documents in Dobruja.⁴²

The development of a new research direction of monastic life in Roman Scythia was favoured by the accidental discovery of the monastic rock-cut complex of Murfatlar (Romania), in 1957. Numerous studies have been published as a result of the archaeological researches carried out, which have advanced various hypotheses on the dating of the complex, the identification of its development phases, reading inscriptions (in Cyrillic, Glagolitic, Greek, and Runic), and the meaning of various symbolic representations incised on the monument walls. Among the numerous scholars involved in the clarification of these aspects, Ion Barnea, Maria Comşa, Kazimir Popkonstantinov, and, more recently, Rossina Kostova, Georgi Atanasov, Florin Curta, Oana Damian, Andra Samson, and Mihai Vasile stand out.⁴³ Nevertheless, despite the intense

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- 40 Ioan G. Coman, *Scritori bisericești din epoca străromână* [Church Writers from the Proto-Romanian Era], (Biblioteca Teologică) 1 (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1979), pp. 185–195.
- 41 Ioan Rămureanu, *Actele Martirice* [The Acts of the Martyrs], (Părinți și scriitori bisericești) 11 (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1982), pp. 338–350; Ioan Rămureanu, “Mișcarea audienilor în Dacia Pontică și Nord-dunăreană (sec. IV–VI)” [The Audianism in Pontic and Trans-Danubian Dacia (4th–6th Centuries)], *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 96 (1978), nos. 9–10, pp. 1053–1070.
- 42 Nestor Vornicescu, *Primele scrieri patristice în literatura română: secolele IV–XVI* [The First Patristic Writings in Romanian Literature: 4th–16th Centuries] (Craiova: Editura Mitropoliei Olteniei, 1984); Nestor Vornicescu, “Una dintre primele scrieri ale literaturii române străvechi: «Pătimirea Sfinților Epictet și Astion» (de la cumpăna secolelor III–IV)” [One of the First Writings of the Old Romanian Literature: «The Passion of the Holy Martyrs Epictet and Astion» (from the Turn of the 4th Century)], *Mitropolia Olteniei* 41 (1989), no. 1, pp. 20–74.
- 43 Ion Barnea, “Les monuments rupestres de Basarabi en Dobroudja,” *Cahiers Archéologiques* 13 (1962), pp. 187–208; Maria Comşa, “K voprosu istolkovaniia nekotorykh grafitto iz Basarabi” [On the Issue of Interpretation of Some Graffiti from Basarabi], *Dacia* [N.S.] 8 (1964), pp. 363–370; Kazimir Popkonstantinov, “Les inscriptions du monastère rupestre près de village Murfatlar (Basarabi). (Etat, théories et faits),” in *Dobrudza. Etudes ethno-culturelles. Recueil d'articles*, eds. Dimităr Simeonov-Angelov and Dimităr Ovcharov (Sofia: Editions de l'Academie Bulgare des Sciences, 1987), pp. 115–145; Rossina Kostova, “Skalniāt manastir pri Basarabi, Severna Dobrudzha: nākoī problemi na interpretatsiāta” [The Rock Monastery near Basarabi, Northern Dobruja: Some Problems of Interpretation], in *Bŭlgarite v Severnoto Prichernomorie. Izsledvaniā i materialī*, 7, eds. Petăr Todorov et al. (Veliko Tarnovo: Universitetsko izdatelstvo “Sv. sv. Kiril i Metodii,” 2000), pp. 131–153; Georgi Atanasov, “Oshte za datirovkata i monasheskata organizatsiā

researches accomplished so far, many aspects related to this complex (such as reading Runic inscriptions, the meaning of certain symbolic representations, the evolution of the complex, and even its dating) have not yet been completely elucidated. Furthermore, as is shown, new hypotheses regarding the evolution and dating of the monument are advanced in the present book.⁴⁴

The discovery and research of the Murfatlar complex were followed by the beginning of new archaeological researches at cave monasteries in the south of Dobruja, situated on Sukha Reka, Dobrich, Kanagiol, and Taban Valleys, as well as on the Black Sea shore, at Kaliakra Cape, Īailata (Kamen Brĭag), and Tĭulenovo, in north-eastern Bulgaria. Most of these monuments had been inventoried and described since the end of the 19th century, by the Karel and Khernengild Shkorpil brothers.⁴⁵ The value of the two scholars' contribution is increased by the fact that, in the years that followed, some of these complexes were severely damaged or even disappeared. Recent studies, authored by Ara Margos and Georgi Atanasov, led to the conclusion that the oldest living level of these monuments (except for those on Kanagiol and Taban Valleys) dates to Late Antiquity (4th–6th centuries).⁴⁶

The amplitude of the Christian monastic phenomenon in Roman Scythia was also revealed by the discovery of other monastic complexes, such as those of Dumbrăveni, Slava Rusă, Casian Cave, Saint Apostle Andrew Cave, Sihaștrilor Cave, and Limanu Cave, on the territory of Romania (Constanța County), researched (some of them) by Costel Chiriac, Tudor Papisima, Lucrețiu Mihăilescu-Bîrliba, Marius Diaconescu, Andrei Opaïț, Cristina Opaïț,

v skalnata obitel do Murfatlar (Basarabi)" [Again on the Dating and Organization of the Monks in the Rock Monastery of Murfatlar (Basarabi)], in *Velikotŭrnovskĭiŭt universitet "Sv. sv. Kiril i Metodii" i bŭlgarskata arheologĭiŭta*, 1, ed. Boris Borisov (Veliko Tarnovo: Universitetsko izdatelstvo "Sv. sv. Kiril i Metodii," 2010), pp. 467–485; Florin Curta, "The Cave and the Dyke: A Rock Monastery on the Tenth-Century Frontier of Bulgaria," *Studia Monastica* 41 (1999), no. 1, pp. 129–149; Oana Damian, Andra Samson, and Mihai Vasile, "Complexul rupestru de la Murfatlar-Basarabi la jumătate de secol de la descoperire. Considerații arheologice" [The Rupestrian Site of Murfatlar-Basarabi, 50 Years after Its Discovery. Archaeological Investigations], *Materiale și Cercetări Arheologice* 5 (2009), pp. 117–158.

44 See below, subchapter 13.4: "The rock-cut monastery near Murfatlar."

45 Karel Shkorpil and Khernengild Shkorpil, "Severoiztochna Bŭlgariĭa v geograficheskoto i arheologicheskoto otnoshenie (I–II)" [Northeastern Bulgaria in Geographical and Archaeological Terms (I–II)], *Sbornik za Narodni Umotvorenĭiŭta, nauka i knizhnina* [The Folklore and Ethnography Collection] 7 (1892), pp. 49–83; 8 (1892), pp. 5–20.

46 Ara Margos, "Svrednovjekovni skalni manastiri po Sukha Reka" [Rocky Monasteries along the Banks of Sukha Reka], *Izvestiĭa na narodniĭa muzei Varna/Bulletin du Musĕe National de Varna* 19 (1983), pp. 125–129; Georgi Atanasov, "Les monastĕres rupestres le long de la rivĕre Suha, dans la rĕgion de Dobrudja de Sud," *Byzantinoslavica* 69 (2011), pp. 189–218.

Teodor Bănică, Valentina Voinea, and Bartłomiej Szmoniewski.⁴⁷ Establishing the chronology of those in Slava Rusă and Dumbrăveni favours (as will be seen in the present book) a better understanding of the evolution phases of the other similar monastic complexes in the region. Another extended monastic cave complex (not yet archaeologically researched), known in Petroșani (Constanța County, Romania), confirms the amplitude of the monastic movement in the province.

In recent years, Emilian Popescu, Ionuț Holubeanu, and Radu Mișu elaborated the first general presentations of monastic life in Roman Scythia.⁴⁸ In this second part of the present book, the ideas exposed in these recent works are updated and detailed, based on the literary and archaeological information available to date.

47 Costel Chiriac and Tudor Papisima, “Un străvechi așezământ creștin dobrogean. Complexul monastic de la Dumbrăveni (județul Constanța)” [An Early Christian Monument in Dobruja—The Monastic Complex from Dumbraveni (County of Constanța)], in *Priveghind și lucrând pentru mântuire. Volum editat la aniversarea a 10 ani de arhipăstorie a Înalț Prea Sfințitului Mitropolit Daniel al Moldovei și Bucovinei (1 iulie 1990–1 iulie 2000)*, eds. Emilian Popescu et al. (Iași: Trinitas, 2000), pp. 197–205; Lucrețiu Mihăilescu-Bîrliba and Marius Diaconescu, “Cercetări arheologice recente în peștera de la Casian” [Recent Archaeological Researches in the Cave from Casian], *Pontica* 24 (1991), pp. 425–432; Andrei Opaț, Cristina Opaț, and Teodor Bănică, “Der frühchristliche Komplex von Slava Rusă,” in *Die Schwarzmeerküste in der Spätantike und im frühen Mittelalter. Referate des dritten, vom 16. bis 19. Oktober 1990 durch die Antiquarische Abteilung der Balkan-Kommission der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften und das Bulgarische Forschungsinstitut veranstalteten Symposions*, eds. Renate Pillinger et al., (Schriften der Balkankommission. Antiquarische Abteilung) 18 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1992), pp. 113–122; Valentina Voinea and Bartłomiej Szmoniewski, “Din nou despre peștera Casian” [Anew about Casian Cave], *Pontica* 44 (2011), pp. 221–238.

48 Emilian Popescu, “Frühes mönchtum in Rumänien,” in Emilian Popescu, *Christianitas Daco-Romana* (Bucharest, Editura Academiei Române, 1994), pp. 217–234; Ionuț Holubeanu, “The Monachism in the Scythia Minor Province from IVth to XIVth Centuries,” in *Études byzantines et post-byzantines*, 5, eds. Emilian Popescu and Tudor Teoteoi (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2006), pp. 243–290; Ionuț Holubeanu, *Monahismul în Dobrogea de la origini până în zilele noastre* [The Monasticism in Dobruja from the Origins to the Present] (Bucharest: Editura Universitară, 2020); Radu Mișu, “Monahismul daco-roman” [Daco-Roman Monasticism], in *Monahismul ortodox românesc: istorie, contribuții și repertoriare*, 1, eds. Mircea Păcurariu and Nicolae Edroiu (Bucharest: Basilica, 2014), pp. 283–307.

A Historical Survey of Eastern Monasticism

The renunciation of material goods and the practice of chastity by Christians have been attested in documents since the foundation of the Church.¹ Wealthy Christians from Jerusalem selling their immovable property (“lands or houses”) and offering the money obtained to the poor of the community are mentioned in the New Testament (Acts 4:34–37).² Jesus Christ Himself also refers in one of his speeches to those who renounce carnal relations for the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 19:12), and Paul the apostle recommends chastity, offering himself as an example (1 Cor. 7:1, 7–8). These passages from the New Testament informed the emergence of an ascetic movement within the first Christian communities, which later developed into monasticism.³

Modern studies no longer regard monasticism as purely an Egyptian creation, as it had long been maintained. Scholars consider that it appeared in many places of the early Christian space (Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor),

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- 1 This chapter offers a short overview of the origins, evolution, and characteristics of monasticism in the Christian East, and not a detailed presentation of its history during Late Antiquity. The main purpose of the presentation is the correct understanding of the origins of monasticism in Roman Scythia and of its place within the eastern monastic movement.
 - 2 In some of the old Christian writings, the Church of Jerusalem during the apostolic age is regarded as a model of monastic life, see Iohannes Cassianus, *Conlationes xxiiii xviii.6.1–4*, ed. Michael Petschenig, (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum) 13/2 (Vienna: C. Gerold's Sohn, 1886), pp. 509–511; John Cassian, *The Conferences xviii.6.1–4*, trans. Edgar C.S. Gibson, (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers) 11/11 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1994), pp. 1226–1227; the 6th canon of the Council of Constantinople (861), *The Canons of the Eastern Orthodox Church*. Available at <https://sites.google.com/site/canonsoc/home/-canons-of-the-particular-councils/constantinopolitanum-861>. Accessed 2022 July 7.
 - 3 Of the numerous studies dedicated to the history of Christian monasticism, we mention: Karl Heussi, *Der Ursprung der Mönchtums* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1936); Pierre Coussin, *Précis d'histoire monastique* (Paris: Bloud & Gay, 1956); Peter Nagel, *Die Motivierung der Askese in der alten Kirche und der Ursprung des Mönchtums* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1966); Karl Suso Frank, *Askese und Mönchtum in der alten Kirche* (Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, Darmstadt, 1975); Antoine Guillaumont, *Aux origines du monachisme chrétien: pour une phénoménologie du monachisme*, 2nd ed., (Spiritualité orientale) 30 (Paris: Cerf, 2019); Emilianos Timiadis, *Le monachisme orthodoxe: hier, demain* (Paris: Buchet/Chastel, 1981); Derwas James Chitty, *The Desert a City: An Introduction to the Study of Egyptian and Palestian Monasticism under the Christian Empire*, 3rd ed. (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimirs' Seminary Press, 1999); Tomáš Špidlík, Michelina Tenace, and Richard Čemus, *Questions monastiques en Orient* (Roma: Pontificio Istituto orientale, 1999).

independently and almost simultaneously.⁴ The phases of its formation as a distinct group within the Church cover the first three Christian centuries, with its full recognition occurring at the beginning of the 4th century.

In the apostolic age, those who followed an austere lifestyle lived within the communities and even their families. Such cases are mentioned as totally normal during the post-apostolic age, as well. As certain Christian writings from the middle of the 2nd century demonstrate, the main characteristic of the ascetic life was, at that time, the observance of chastity.⁵

The ascetics' separation from their families, through self-isolation on the outskirts of towns or villages, appeared later on. This practice was followed by the ever-greater separation from their hometowns, without the total interruption of the relations with them, however. The withdrawal from the world and the ascetics' organization in *asketeria* (ἀσκητήρια) had been attested in Egypt and Palestine as early as the 2nd century.⁶ The reason for the retreat was the desire to observe a more severe asceticism, far from the temptations of the world. In what concerns the ascetics' association, it was motivated by the wish to strengthen each other through spiritual efforts and to get mutual help in daily needs.⁷

By the turn of the 3rd century, some of the ascetics separated completely from the communities in cities and villages, retreating to the most remote wilderness. The first such case attested in documents is that of Bishop Narcissus of Jerusalem (185–213). Even though Narcissus eventually returned to Jerusalem, his initiative could have served as an example to other ascetics. According to Eusebius' testimony, "all admired him [i.e., Narcissus] the more on account of his retirement and philosophy [i.e., his ascetic mode of life]."⁸

4 Guillaumont, *Aux origines du monachisme chrétien*, pp. 290–291.

5 Justin Martyr, *The First Apology* xv, in *The Writings of Justin Martyr and Athenagoras*, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, trans. Marcus Dods George Reith and B.P. Pratten, (Ante-Nicene Christian Library) 2 (Edinburgh: Clark, 1892), pp. 18–19; Athenagoras, *A Plea for the Christians* xxxiii, in *The Writings of Justin Martyr and Athenagoras*, pp. 417–418; Heussi, *Der Ursprung*, p. 38.

6 Heussi, *Der Ursprung*, pp. 44–45, 52, and 65.

7 Heussi, *Der Ursprung*, pp. 21, 30, and 50–62; Ioan N. Floca, "Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, reorganizator al vieții monastice" [Saint Basil the Great: Reorganizer of the Monastic Life], in *Sfântul Vasile cel Mare: Închinare la 1600 de ani de la săvârșirea sa* [Saint Basil the Great: A Tribute to 1600 Years since His Death], eds. Bartolomeu Anania et al., (Biblioteca Teologică) 3 (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1980), pp. 330–331.

8 Eusebius Pamphilus, *Church History* vi.ix.6, vi.x, trans. Arthur Cushman McGiffert, (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers) 11/1 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Christian Classics Ethereal Library, 2003), pp. 619 and 621.

The practice of the total and definitive retreat from communities is attested in Egypt in the second half of the 3rd century. According to the tradition recorded by Jerome of Stridon, Paul of Thebes (†c.341) retreated to the desert during the persecution of Decius (249–251), where he lived until the end of his life.⁹ This ascetic lifestyle spread later in the early 4th century, due to Anthony the Great (†356). His retreat was progressive: first “near his own house,” then at “the tombs that lay at some distance from the village,” and eventually “in the desert ... [in] the mountain.”¹⁰ Anthony’s case encouraged a complete isolation from the world. A great number of ascetics willing to follow his example gathered around him. Later, his story was made known through the biography written by Athanasius of Alexandria (*Life of Anthony*), which made a major contribution to the recognition of the idiorrhythmic way of life in the whole Church.

On the other hand, coenobitic monasticism (communal monasticism) prevailed in Upper Egypt. Shortly after 313, Pachomius of Thebaid (†346) founded the first coenobium in Tabennesis, a deserted village, in c.323. Even before his activity, there had already been monastic communities in Egypt organized to a greater or lesser extent according to the communal lifestyle. Nevertheless, Pachomius was the first to set down a written monastic rule. Thus, chastity, poverty, and obedience became the fundamental principles of monastic life.

Pachomian monasteries looked like military camps, surrounded by a wall (one of the marks of a coenobium), meant to isolate the monks and to protect them from the temptations of the external world. The daily program of the monks was established in detail. They participated daily in common liturgical services, which were held in the hall for prayer. As work was one of the daily duties of Pachomian monks, there were various workshops in every monastery, and the fields neighbouring the coenobium were regularly cultivated. The surplus was donated to nunneries and prisons, even if charitable activity was not essential in the life of the Pachomian coenobia.¹¹

9 Saint Jerome, *Vie de Paul de Thèbes et vie d'Hilarion*, trans., introd., and notes Pierre de Labriolle (Paris: Bloud, 1907), pp. 5–29; Hippolyte Delehaye, “La Personnalité historique de S. Paul de Thèbes,” *Analecta Bollandiana* 44 (1926), pp. 64–69; Henri Leclercq, “Paul de Thèbes,” in *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie chrétienne et de Liturgie*, 13/2, eds. Fernand Cabrol and Henri Leclercq (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1938), col. 2700–2706; E. Coleiro, “St. Jerome’s Lives of the Hermits,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 11 (1957), no. 3, pp. 161–178; David Hugh Farmer, *The Oxford Dictionary of Saints*, 5th ed. (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), p. 416.

10 St. Athanasius, *The Life of Saint Antony* 3, 8, and 11, trans. Robert T. Meyer (New York, N.Y./Mahwah, N.J.: Newman Press, 1978), pp. 20, 26, and 29. On Anthony, see also Chitty, *The Desert a City*, pp. 1–7.

11 Adalbert de Vagüé, “Foreword,” in *Pachomian koinonia*, 1, (Cistercian Studies Series) 45 (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1980), pp. vii–xxiii; Chitty, *The Desert*

In the last quarter of the 4th century, Shenoute, the leader of the “White Monastery,” a coenobium in the Thebais desert (Upper Egypt), wrote his regulations, stricter than the Pachomian ones. He is the one who imposed a period of trial to the newcomers in the monastery, thus introducing the concept of noviciate to monastic life. He would permit the monks to retreat to the desert for a more severe asceticism only after several years spent in the monastery, obliging them to maintain contact with it. His monks were more involved in charitable actions for lay Christians than the Pachomians, thus resembling the Basilian monks (see below).¹²

At the beginning of the 4th century (in 315), another ascetic, named Amoun, from the Delta region, retreated to Mount Nitria on the edge of the Western Desert (Lower Egypt). There, he laid the foundations of a monastic colony (the gateway to the desert), where the anchoritic and semicoenobitic paths coexisted. After a while (in 338), as Nitria became crowded and unsuitable for the practice of silent seclusion, Amoun retreated 10–12 miles southward, where he founded the Kellia colony of anchorites. Between 330 and 340, Macarius the Great (†390) settled in Wadi en-Natrun, 40 miles southward of Kellia, laying the foundations of the monastic center of Scetis, another colony of anchorites. It is there that John Cassian and his fellow countryman, Germanus, lived between c.385 and 399, at a time when the three colonies in Lower Egypt (Nitria, Kellia, and Scetis) were flourishing.

However, at the close of the 4th century, monastic life in Nitria, Kellia, and, to some extent, Scetis, was seriously affected by the Anthropomorphist-Origenist controversy. In that context, most of the Origenist monks there were driven out of Egypt, taking refuge in Constantinople where John Chrysostom

a City, pp. 7–11, 21–22 ff.; Joseph Patrich, *Sabas, Leader of Palestinian Monasticism: A Comparative Study in Eastern Monasticism, Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, (Dumbarton Oaks Studies) 32 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1995), pp. 17–22; James M. Drayton, *Pachomius as Discovered in the Worlds of Fourth Century Christian Egypt*, [Ph.M. thesis] (Sydney, 2002), pp. 43–55; Floca, “Sfântul Vasile cel Mare,” pp. 332–333; Nicolae Chițescu, “Introducere generală” [General Introduction], in Sfântul Ioan Casian, *Scieri alese: Așezămintele mânăstirești, Convorbiri duhovnicești și Despre întruparea Domnului* [St. John Cassian, *Writings: Institutes, Conferences, and On the Incarnation of the Lord*], trans. Vasile Cojocaru and David Popescu, eds. Dumitru Soare et al., (Părinți și scriitori bisericești) 57 (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1990), pp. 28–29.

12 Patrich, *Sabas*, pp. 20–22; Andrew Crislip, “Care for the Sick in Shenoute’s Monasteries,” in *Christianity and Monasticism in Upper Egypt*, 1, eds. Gawdat Gabra and Hany Takla (Cairo: The American University in Cairo Press, 2008), pp. 21–30; Stephen Emmel, “Shenoute’s Place in the History of Monasticism,” in *Christianity and Monasticism in Upper Egypt*, 1, pp. 31–46; Bentley Layton, “The Ancient Rules of Shenoute’s Monastic Federation,” in *Christianity and Monasticism in Upper Egypt*, 1, pp. 73–81.

was the archbishop. Their flight was incited by the implication of Theophilus of Alexandria (384–412) in the dispute that occurred in the desert among the educated monks, known as Origenists, and the simple ones, who were Anthropomorphists. In that troubled context, John Cassian and Germanus left the desert of Egypt, as well. The departure of the Origenists greatly affected the reputation of these centres.¹³

In Palestine, the homeland of Christianity and ascetic living, organized monasticism also started in the early 4th century (before 313), first in the desert near Gaza, then in other parts: close to the Biblical places (such as Jerusalem and Bethlehem), in Judaeen Desert, in the lowland (Shephela), and in Sinai. The monks there were divided into three categories: anchorites, laurae dwellers, and coenobia dwellers. There were also monks living as recluses in monasteries near the cities or in the cities themselves, near churches. As in Egypt, laurae were a combination between anchoritism and coenobitism. During the weekdays, monks lived in their own cells, either alone, or together with a disciple, and on Saturday and Sunday, they participated in the common religious services officiated in the church of the laura. In other cases, a coenobium existed in the middle of a laura and was subordinate to the abbot of the laura. It was there that young monks spent their novitiate period, before retiring to a cell in the laura.¹⁴

The provinces in the north-eastern part of the Roman Empire (Syria and Mesopotamia) also have an old monastic tradition. The monks there distinguished themselves through the practice of a severe asceticism. It was also there that St. Simeon Stylites (†459) appeared and imposed his way of living on a small platform atop a pillar. This lifestyle was considered another form of reclusion from the world [a ξενιτεία (isolation) on the vertical].

During the first half of the 4th century, three monastic centres are known on the territory of Mesopotamia: Shiggar range near Nisibis, the Amida and Harran-Edessa regions, as well as Aones Phadana. Another important centre, founded by Paul the monk, was Jugatum, in Coele Syria. Since the first half

13 Hugh Gerard Evelyn-White, *The Monasteries of the Wādi 'N Natrūn*, 1 (The History of the Monasteries of Nitria and of Scetis), 2nd ed. (New York: Arno Press, 1973); Chitty, *The Desert a City*, pp. 11 ff.; Patrich, *Sabas*, pp. 11–17; Guillaumont, *Aux origines du monachisme chrétien*, pp. 223–224 ff.; Lucien Regnault, *The Day-to-Day Life of the Desert Fathers in Fourth-Century Egypt* (Petersham, MA: St. Bede's Publications, 1999); Norman Russell, *Theophilus of Alexandria* (London: Routledge, 2007), pp. 18–34; Nicolae Chifâr, "Începuturile monahismului răsăritean: Egipt, Țara Sfântă, Muntele Sinai și Siria" [The Beginnings of Eastern Monasticism: Egypt, Holy Land, Mount Sinai, and Syria], in *Monahismul ortodox românesc: istorie, contribuții și repertorizare*, 1, eds. Mircea Păcurariu and Nicolae Edroiu (Bucharest: Basilica, 2014), pp. 40–49.

14 Patrich, *Sabas*, pp. 3–10 and 291–297.

of the 4th century, there had been monasteries in Osrhoene, in the region of Antioch (at Gindarus and Teleda), and in Euphratesia (at Zeugma), as well. In the second half of the 4th century, other monastic centres appeared in the south-eastern extremity of Cilicia and on Mount Amanus (near Antioch), near Cyrrhus (Euphratesia), and in the regions of Chalcis and Apamea.¹⁵

As time went on, around the great Syrian ascetics appeared a lot of their disciples' cells. The community thus formed had the aspect of a *laura*, but its internal organization was similar to that of a *coenobium*. The monks gathered for prayer every day, not only on the weekend.¹⁶

In the last quarter of the 4th century, *coenobitism* also developed in Syria, at the same time with the practice of extreme individual asceticism. Monasteries were established close to villages and agricultural areas. The organization rule differed from one to another; in most of them the monks worked to support themselves. Receiving children in monastic communities was forbidden in Syria, as in Egypt.¹⁷

The spread of monastic life in Asia Minor is related to the name of Eustathius of Sebasteia (†377). He studied in his youth (in the early 320s) in Alexandria (Egypt), where supposedly he had contact with the Egyptian monastic movement there. Sozomen says that Eustathius founded a society of monks in Armenia, Paphlagonia, and Pontus. Eustathius and some of his disciples are blamed for several exaggerations about fasting, material goods, marriage, and clothes, which were condemned by the canons of the Synod of Gangra (c.340).¹⁸

15 Sozomen, *The Ecclesiastical History* VI.34, trans. Chester D. Hartranft, (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers) II/2 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1979), pp. 827–828; Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *A History of the Monks of Syria* II.9, III.4–5, IV.2, V.3–5, VI.13, X.3, XVIII.1, and XXI.2, 2nd ed., trans., introd., and notes Richard Price, (Cistercian Studies Series) 88 (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publication, 2008), pp. xvii, xix, 28, 38–39, 49–50, 59–60, 67, 90, 126–127, and 150–151; John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints*, trans. and ed. E.W. Brooks (Turnhout: Brepols, 2003); Arthur Vööbus, *The Origin of Monasticism in Mesopotamia* (New York: American Society of Church History, 1951), pp. 14–35, 256–278, and 292–315; Arthur Vööbus, *History of the Ascetism in the Syrian Orient*, 2, (Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium) 196 (Subsidia) 17 (Leuven: Secrétariat du CorpusSCO, 1960); Patrich, *Sabas*, pp. 22–28; Chițescu, “Introducere generală,” pp. 25 and 32; Chifăr, “Începuturile monahismului,” pp. 63–66.

16 Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *A History of the Monks* II.5, p. 25; Patrich, *Sabas*, pp. 23–24.

17 Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *A History of the Monks* III.4, pp. 38–39; Patrich, *Sabas*, pp. 23–28.

18 Sozomen, *The Ecclesiastical History* III.14, pp. 651–652; Socrates Scholasticus, *The Ecclesiastical History* II.43, trans. Chester D. Hartranft, (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers) II/2 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 188. On the canons of the Synod of Gangra, see <https://sites.google.com/site/canonsoc/home/-canons-of-the-particular-councils/gangra-council-340>. Accessed 2022 July 19. Gustave Bardy, “Asie, depuis les

This kind of ascetic movement was widely spread in Asia Minor. In the middle of the 4th century, it is attested also in the Semi-Arian milieu of Constantinople. Marathonius of Nicomedia, who was a deacon of Archbishop Macedonius (342–360) at that time, founded many such monastic communities in the capital city.¹⁹

Before Basil the Great, however, monasticism had not made significant progress in Asia Minor. An Egyptian monk (Abba Piamun) who arrived in Pontus and Armenia during the reign of Valens (364–378), confessed to John Cassian that he met sarabaites (the most numerous) there, a coenobium close to certain towns and villages, but no anchorites (such as those in Egypt). Sarabaites' way of living was considered a deviation from the confirmed forms of monastic life and incompatible with perfection (pseudo-monks).²⁰

A similar situation seems to have existed also in the western part of the diocese of Pontica and in the diocese of Asiana. In the latter, documents attest to several nunneries at Cyzicus (351/360) and a monastery at Lampsacus (the middle of the 4th century) in Hellespontus, a monastery at Synaus (the beginning of the 4th century?) in Phrygia Pacatiana, and, a little later, three monasteries and a nunnery in Lycia (the beginning of the 5th century).²¹ However, none of these was a famous monastic centre. In what concerns ascetics, Socrates Scholasticus and Sozomen mention the existence of a Novatian anchorite, Eutychianus, on Mount Olympus in Bithynia, during the reign of Constantine the Great (306–337). He had the reputation of a wondermaker and had a

débuts de la prédication chrétienne jusqu'à l'invasion de l'Islam," in *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastiques*, 4, eds. A. De Meyer and Ét. Van Cauwenbergh (Paris: Letouzey et Letouzey et Ané, 1930), pp. 1023–1024; Gilbert Dagron, "Les moines et la ville. La monachisme à Constantinople jusqu'au concile de Chalcédoine (451)," in *Travaux et Mémoires*, 4, (Centre de recherche d'histoire et civilisation byzantines) (Paris: De Boccard, 1970), pp. 249–253; Patrich, *Sabas*, pp. 28–29; Anna M. Silvas, *The Asketikon of Saint Basil the Great* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 53–86.

19 Sozomen, *The Ecclesiastical History* IV.2.3, 20.2, and 27.4, pp. 670, 702, and 717; Socrates Scholasticus, *The Ecclesiastical History* II.38.4, p. 175; Dagron, "Les moines et la ville," pp. 239 and 244–253; Patrich, *Sabas*, p. 29.

20 John Cassian, *The Conferences* XVIII.7, pp. 1230–1232. On Sarabaites, see Malcolm Choat, "Philological and Historical Approaches to the Search for the 'Third Type' of Egyptian Monk," in *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millennium. II. Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Coptic Studies, Leiden, 27 August–2 September 2000*, eds. Mat Immerzeel and Jacques Van Der Vliet, (*Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta*) 133 (Leuven/Paris/Dudley, MA, 2004), pp. 857–865; Maribel Dietz, *Wandering Monks, Virgins, and Pilgrims: Ascetic Travel in the Mediterranean world A.D. 300–800* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005), pp. 69–105.

21 Sylvain Destephen, "Quatre études sur le monachisme asianique (IV^e–VII^e siècle)," *Journal des Savants* (2010), pp. 196–208.

disciple named Auxanon, who later became presbyter of the Novatian Church. Together with the latter, Alexander the Paphlagonian lived as a monk, as well.²² Most probably they were not the only Christians in the region that followed such a way of life.

Basil the Great (†379) is the one who had a major contribution to the development of monasticism in Asia Minor. After completing his studies in Constantinople and Athens, he visited the monastic centres in Lower Egypt, Palestine, Syria, and Mesopotamia. In c.356, Basil retreated to Annisa, near Neocaesarea, on the bank of the Iris River, at one of his family properties, living as a recluse for a few years. After this experience, he decidedly inclined toward coenobitism, considering it the perfect form of monasticism. His ascetic teachings are preserved in *Ascetica*, *Moralia*, and the Longer and Shorter Responses (*Detailed and Short Rule*).²³

Basil the Great's ascetic teachings are based on the evangelical commandment of the love of God and of the neighbour. To fulfill it to the greatest extent, he recommends the establishment of coenobia close to villages, towns, and cities, encouraging the monks' active involvement in activities of helping the poor, the sick, the travellers, and other vulnerable groups (orphans, widows, old people). To do so, many of the monasteries had a hostelry and a hospital within their premises, as well as a school to educate children in their neighborhood. Each monastic community was seen as a family, headed by a *proestos*, who had the obligation of taking good care of all the monks that were under his spiritual authority. For this reason, Basilian communities were moderate in number of dwellers, estimated at 30–40 monks. Moreover, the monasteries were under the authority of the bishop in whose jurisdiction area they were located. They were not organized in a confederate framework, but each one was autonomous. To maintain the relation between them, their leaders had to meet periodically to discuss the disciplinary problems that would arise.

The program of the Basilian monasteries combined common prayer and work. Only moderate ascetic practice was recommended. With the *proestos'* approval, educated monks could devote themselves to the study of the Scriptures.²⁴

22 Socrates Scholasticus, *The Ecclesiastical History* 1.13 and 11.38.11–12, pp. 61 and 176; Sozomen, *The Ecclesiastical History* 1.14, p. 552.

23 Patrīch, *Sabas*, pp. 28–30; Silvas, *The Asketikon*, pp. 86–98; J. Gribomont, "Le monachisme au sein de l'Eglise en Syrie et en Cappadoce," *Studia monastica* 7 (1965), no. 1, pp. 7–24; J. Gribomont, "Saint Basile et le monachisme enthousiaste," *Irénikon* 53 (1980), pp. 123–144; Floca, "Sfântul Vasile cel Mare," pp. 334–354.

24 Emmanuel Amand de Mendieta, "Le système cénobitique basilien comparé au système cénobitique pachômien," *Revue de l'histoire des religions* 152 (1957), no. 1, pp. 34–71; Patrīch, *Sabas*, pp. 30–31 and 95.

Basil's prestige contributed to the rapid spread of his monastic doctrine, not only in the East but also to the West, his *Small Asketikon* being translated into Latin even before the end of the 4th century.²⁵

In Constantinople, the first attested Orthodox monk is anchorite Isaac, who arrived there from Syria in 378 in order to reprove the Semi-Arian Emperor Valens for his faith. After accomplishing his mission, Isaac lived in a cell located outside the city walls. On its site, one of his disciples, Dalmatios, built the Dalmatou in 382–383. This is considered to be the oldest Orthodox monastery in the capital city. Other monasteries were founded in or around the city (the Diou monastery, the Rouphinianai, the Akoimetai, the Stoudios). The number of monasteries greatly increased in Constantinople during the 5th and 6th centuries. Numerous other monks lived isolated or in small groups, on the side of the roads or near the places of worship in the cities.²⁶

Regarding the diocese of Thrace, it did not distinguish itself in any way from the point of view of monastic life in the 4th century. In his *Church History* (written between 439 and 450), Sozomen pointed to the absence of the monastic communities there, but sustained the existence of anchorites.²⁷ It is possible that the kind of enthusiastic ascetic movement, attested in Asia Minor and Constantinople (see above), also prevailed in the diocese of Thrace before the last quarter of the 4th century. The late development of monasticism in that area is also confirmed by the results of archaeological research.²⁸ The oldest monasteries (excluding Scythia) identified up to the present moment date to the end of the 4th–the beginning of the 5th century.²⁹

The Council of Chalcedon (451) marked an important moment in the reorganization of monastic life in the empire. Five of the canons issued at this council regulate various aspects related to monastic life: the building of monasteries with the approval of the local bishop and the subordination of the monks to him (can. 4, 8, and 18); banning monks from leaving the monasteries

25 Patrich, *Sabas*, p. 31; Anna M. Silvas, "Edessa to Cassino: The Passage of Basil's *Asketikon* to the West," *Vigiliae Christianae* 56 (2002), no. 3, pp. 247–259.

26 Dagron, "Les moines et la ville," pp. 231–249 and 253–257; Peter Hatlie, *The Monks and Monasteries of Constantinople ca. 350–850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 65–71.

27 Sozomen, *The Ecclesiastical History* III.14, p. 652: "although the Thracians, the Illyrians, and the other European nations were still inexperienced in monastic communities, yet they were not altogether lacking in men devoted to [monastic] philosophy." On the meaning of the passage, see also Dagron, "Les moines et la ville," pp. 238–239.

28 Alexander Manev, "Early Monasticism in Thrace: An Issue of Archaeology," *Studia Academica Šumenensia* 4 (2017), pp. 218–236; Ivo Topalilov, "An Early Christian Monastery near the Village of Dragoinovo, Parvomai Municipally (Preliminary Report)," *Studia Academica Šumenensia* 7 (2020), pp. 209–235.

29 Manev, "Early Monasticism," pp. 227–229.

without the consent of the local bishop (can. 4 and 23); the interdiction to change the destination of the monasteries and to alienate their effects (can. 24). By these canons, confirmed and enriched one century later by the legislation of Justinian I, monasticism officially became an institution of the Church.³⁰

The main motivation of the ascetics to retreat into isolated places was their wish to live in an environment that encouraged the accomplishment of evangelical teachings to the greatest extent. For this reason, when the area where they lived no longer provided these conditions, they left it, searching for others, more suitable to their way of living. The main causes that led to departures from the regions inhabited by monks were either the spread of the secular spirit or barbarian invasions. Situations of this type, frequently met throughout the history of Christian monasticism, led to the decline of certain traditional monastic centres, such as those from the desert of Egypt or, later, from Mount Olympus in Bithynia. In Roman Scythia, as this part of the book reveals, barbarian attacks from the turn of the 7th century deeply affected monasticism in the province.

30 Norman P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1 (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990), pp. 89, 91, 95, and 97–98; Dagron, “Les moines et la ville,” pp. 272–275; Patrich, *Sabas*, pp. 32–35.

Primitive Ascetism in Roman Scythia

As already shown in the *Introduction*, the first certain proof of the existence of Christians in Scythia (in Tomi) dates to the second half of the 2nd century or the first half of the 3rd. Given the lack of documentary information, it is difficult to say if and to what extent the ascetic type of living was adopted by any of the faithful Christians in the province before the 3rd century. The hypothesis that such cases existed finds support in the words of Jesus Christ on voluntary chastity (Mt. 19:12) and in the exhortations for such a living by Paul the apostle (1 Cor. 7:1 and 7–8), written in the pages of the New Testament. Another argument that may be used to support this hypothesis is the value that old local populations placed on ascetic living, which was mentioned by several writers from Antiquity. According to Posidonius of Apamea (c.135–c.51 BC), the Mysians respected a vegetarian diet and some of the Thracians lived in chastity.¹ Even though Strabo (64/63 BC–c.24 AD) rejects the idea that Thracians valued chastity, he admits their religious zeal.² At the same time, he points to the valuing of the vegetarian diet by the Getae, respected among them. According to Strabo's testimony, this Pythagorean practice had reached them due to Zalmoxis, considered by the Greek geographer a former slave of Pythagoras.³ Possible references to the ascetic living of some of the Dacians are also found in an excerpt from the book *Jewish Antiquities* of Flavius Josephus (c.37 AD–c.100 AD). The Jewish historian compares the Essenes' living (a mystic sect in Palestine that

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- 1 Strabo, *Geographica* 7.3.3, 2, ed. Gustav Kramer (Berlin: Nicolai, 1847), p. 15⁴⁻⁶; Strabo, *Geography* 7.3.3, trans., intro., and notes Duane W. Roller (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p. 292: "Poseidonios says that the Mysians abstain from living things, including their animals, out of piety. They use honey, milk, and cheese, and live peacefully, because of which they are called 'god fearing' and *kapnobatai*. Some of the Thracians live apart from women and are called the Founders, and because of their honor are dedicated to the gods and live in freedom from fear."
 - 2 Strabo, *Geographica* 7.3.4, p. 17²²⁻²⁶; Strabo, *Geography* 7.3.4, p. 294: "Thus to believe that the womanless Getians are particularly reverent is clearly contrary to reason. A feeling for the divine is especially strong among these people from what Poseidonios and other histories generally say and should not be disbelieved."
 - 3 Strabo, *Geographica* 7.3.5, p. 18^{1-2, 4-5, 21-23}; Strabo, *Geography* 7.3.5, p. 294: "It is said that a certain Getian, named Zalmoxis, was a slave of Pythagoras ... When he returned home the leaders and his people paid close attention to him because he could make predictions from signs. ... The Pythagorean concept of abstaining from living things, handed down by Zalmoxis, still survived."

flourished from the 2nd century BC to the 1st AD) to that of Dacian *pleistoi*.⁴ Josephus' reference is unclear, however, as the word 'Δακῶν' ('Dacians') in the preserved Greek manuscripts is considered by certain scholars as an altered form of the term 'Sadducees'.⁵

By the turn of the 5th century, the Bessi converted to Christianity by the Bishop Nicetas of Remesiana (†414) (Dacia Mediterranea) are said to have become monks and ascetics. This information may be regarded as another proof of the valuing by the Thracian tribes in the Balkans of ascetic living. Certain members of these populations adopted it after their conversion to Christianity.⁶

These general aspects must certainly not lead to the conclusion that monasticism appeared on the territory between the Danube and the Black Sea before the first half of the 4th century. Moreover, as shown in the previous subchapter, the diocese of Thrace did not distinguish itself from the point of view of monastic life. Nevertheless, the general attitude was favorable for the creation of an elementary ascetic movement, based on an appreciation of austere living, in general, by a part of the local population. In this context, the adoption by some members of the newly constituted Christian communities of certain ascetic practices, such as chastity and willing poverty, must not be excluded. This initial nucleus could have been subsequently consolidated by Christian ascetics who came to Scythia from other provinces of the empire, either as missionaries, or as refugees or exiled. Finally, the hypothesis of the early emergence and development of the local pre-monastic movement is also supported by the quite early organization of monasticism in Scythia, which is archaeologically attested in the second half of the 4th century.

4 Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* xviii.1.5 <22>, 8, trans. Louis H. Feldman, (Loeb Classical Library) 433 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1965), pp. 408–409.

5 See André Dupont-Sommer, "On a Passage of Josephus Relating to the Essenes (Antiq. xviii. 22)," *Journal of Semitic studies* 1 (1956), no. 4, pp. 361–366. On the ascetic practices of the Geto-Dacians, see also Alexandru Barnea, "Practici ascetice la geto-daci" [Ascetic Practices of the Geto-Dacians], in *Monahismul ortodox românesc: istorie, contribuții și repertoriare*, eds. Mircea Păcurariu and Nicolae Edroiu, 1 (Bucharest: Basilica, 2014), pp. 273–280.

6 See Ștefan Alexe, "Sfântul Niceta de Remesiana și ecumenicitatea patristică din secolele al iv-lea și al v-lea" [Saint Nicetas of Remesiana and the Patristic Ecumenicity in the 4th–5th Centuries], *Studii Teologice* 21 (1969), nos. 7–8, pp. 472 and 504; Ioan G. Coman, *Scrîtori bisericești din epoca străromână* [Church Writers from the Proto-Romanian Era], (Biblioteca Teologică) 1 (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1979), pp. 124–128; Hagith Sivan, "Nicetas' (of Remesiana) Mission and Stilicho's Illyrican Ambition: Notes on Paulinus of Nola Carmen xvii (Propempticon)," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 41 (1995), p. 87. On the presence of the Bessi in Roman Scythia, see Lucrețiu Mihăilescu-Bîrliba, "The Bessi at Mihai Bravu (Moesia Inferior): An Overview," *Studia Academica Șumenensia* 7 (2020), pp. 159–171.

The first literary information about the pre-monastic movement in the Istro-Pontic area is found in the *Passion* of the Holy Martyrs Epictet and Astion.⁷ These martyrs were from Asia Minor, either from the province of Phrygia, or (according to another opinion) from Nicomedia in Bithynia.⁸ In the year 287, at the beginning of Diocletian's reign (284–305), driven by the wish to live in silence in a region where they were not known, they took refuge in the city of Halmyris (now Murighiol, Romania), situated in the north-eastern part of Roman Scythia, where they lived for almost seventeen years. They were arrested and eventually beheaded during the persecution of Diocletian. Based on some of the data found in their *Passion* and on the information generally known about this persecution, it was established that they were executed in the year 304.⁹

In this hagiographical text, the term '*monachus*' ('monk') appears for the first time associated with Roman Scythia. It can be found in five places near Astion's name: once at the beginning and the end of the document and three times in its content.¹⁰ Still, as monasticism was in the process of being organized at that time (287–304), scholars posed the question of the authenticity of this appellation.

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- 7 *De ss. Epicteto presb. et Astione monacho, martyribus almiridensibus in Scythia*, in *Acta Sanctorum Julii*, 2, eds. Conrado Janningo, Joannes Baptista Sollerio, and Joannes Pinio (Antwerp: Apud Iacobum du Moulin, 1721), pp. 538–551. The first draft of the *Passion* is dated during the events related to the trial of the two martyrs, and the final redaction of the text up by the end of the 4th century [Mihail Zahariade, "The Episcopal Basilica from Halmyris and the Crypt of Epictetus and Astion," *Thraco-Dacica* 1 (24) (2009), nos. 1–2, pp. 139–140 and 147–148; see also Nestor Vornicescu, "Una dintre primele scrieri ale literaturii române străvechi: «Pătimirea Sfinților Epictet și Astion» (de la cumpăna secolelor III–IV)" [One of the First Writings of the Old Romanian Literature: «The *Passion* of the Holy Martyrs Epictet and Astion» (from the Turn of the 4th Century)], *Mitropolia Olteniei* 41 (1989), no. 1, p. 55 (the end of the 4th–the beginning of the 6th century)].
- 8 Phrygia: Ioan Rămureanu, "Sfinți și martiri la Tomis" [Saints and Martyrs in Tomi], *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 92 (1974), nos. 7–8 p. 979. Bithynia: Vornicescu, "Una dintre primele scrieri," p. 48.
- 9 Alexandru Madgearu, "Data pătimirii sfinților Epictet și Astion de la Halmyris" [The Date of the Martyrdom of Saints Epictet and Astion from Halmyris], *Pontica* 45 (2012), pp. 539–548; Alexandru Madgearu, "The Persecution of Galerius in Scythia, with a Special Regard to Halmyris," in *Serdica Edict (311 AD). Concepts and Realizations of the Idea of Religious Toleration. Proceedings of the International Interdisciplinary Conference (Sofia, 2012)*, eds. Dimitar Dimitrov and Veselina Vachkova (Sofia: Tangra, 2014), pp. 128–132; Alexandru Madgearu, "Martyrs from the Danubian Limes during the Reign of Galerius," in: *Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference History and Theology, Constanța (Romania), November 17–18, 2020*, ed. Ionuț Holubeanu (Bucharest: Editura Universitară, 2021), pp. 64–68.
- 10 *De ss. Epicteto presb.* title; III.20 and 23; IV.34 and 49, pp. 538, 545, and 548–549.

Nestor Vornicescu, former metropolitan of Oltenia in Romania, firmly asserted in a study dedicated to this hagiographical text that this term was an addition from a later period. Nevertheless, he pointed out that Epictet and Astion had lived in chastity, which at that time was a characteristic of Christian ascetic life.¹¹

Emilian Popescu considered that the hypothesis for the two martyrs to have been monks may be admitted, without totally excluding the possibility that the term ‘monk,’ associated with Astion’s name, may have been added to the document.¹² Later, in another study, he tended to believe that Astion was part of the category of the hermits that remained in contact with the monasteries in the system of *laura*.¹³

From our point of view, it is more important to identify the features of the life of the two martyrs on the basis of which their status within the Church can be established. At the same time, we consider that the assumption of a strict interdependence between the authenticity of the term ‘*monachus*’ and the affiliation of the two saints to the ascetic movement of the time is incorrect. Actually, even if the term is a late addition to the original text, this does not exclude the possibility for the two martyrs to have been monks in the broad sense of the word (ascetics). Therefore, the analysis must not focus on the existence of the term ‘*monachus*’ in the protograph of the hagiographic record, but show if the text reflects the affiliation of Epictet and Astion to the ascetic movement of the time.¹⁴

The information exposed in the *Passion* permits the identification of the main characteristics of their living. The content of the document shows that none of them were married. No paragraph mentions any woman to have lived

11 Vornicescu, “Una dintre primele scrieri,” p. 61.

12 Emilian Popescu, “Sfinții Martiri Epictet și Astion” [Saints Martyrs Epictet and Astion], in *Sfinți români și apărători ai legii strămoșești*, ed. Nestor Vornicescu (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1987), p. 159; Emilian Popescu, “Martiri și sfinți în Dobrogea (1)” [Martyrs and Saints in Dobruja (1)], *Studii Teologice* 41 (1989), no. 3, p. 53.

13 Emilian Popescu, “Sfântul Ioan Casian, părinte al monahismului românesc și teolog al asceticii patristice” [Saint John Cassian, a Father of Romanian Monasticism and a Theologian of Patristic Asceticism], in *Fiu al României și Părinte al Bisericii Universale. Sfântul Ioan Casian. Viața și învățătura lui*, ed. Mihai Iordăchescu, (Teologie și spiritualitate) 15 (Iași: Trinitas, 2002), p. 12.

14 The term ‘*monachus*’ is found in early Christian literature, both in Greek (‘μοναχός’) and in Syrian (‘ihādāy’). Its earliest documentary attestation dates to the beginning of the 2nd century, in the *Epistle of Barnabas* [Aimé Solignac, “Monachisme,” in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité*, 10, eds. Marcel Viller et al. (Paris: Beauchesne, 1980), col. 1547–1551]. Before monasticism became official, it referred generally to Christians who had given up their family life and material goods. This meaning, as shown below, is perfectly compatible with the ascetic features of Epictet and Astion’s life.

with them or to have been in an established relationship with them. Moreover, right from the opening of the document, Epictet is said to have led a pure life, the author using the Latin adjective ‘*castus*’ (‘morally pure’), suggesting also his caste life:

there was a priest from the East, named Epictet, who was leading a pious life and was morally pure in every familiar intercourse with the others. As he had been in the service of the Lord since early childhood, strengthening himself with all the teachings of Jesus Christ.¹⁵

The two individuals had given up their fortune afterwards, willingly embracing poverty. Epictet actually exhorted Astion to abandon all his material goods from their first meeting:

Come, therefore, son, and leave those considered valuable in this world ... as all these, that can be seen now, are ephemeral and perishable ... Come, therefore, and listen to me, my dearest son, and I will show you what gold you must choose and what silver you must wish ... As this gold tested in fire is Christ, our Lord.¹⁶

After his martyrdom, Astion asked his mother in a vision to give his part of the family fortune to the poor, for his eternal rest and for her salvation,¹⁷ encouraging her, moreover, to share also her riches:

15 *De ss. Epicteto presb.* I.1, p. 540: “*erat quidam presbyter in partibus Orientis, nomine Epictetus, religiosam vitam agens, et castus in omni sua conversatione existens. Hic namque a parva aetate in servitio Domini enutritus, exercebatur in omnibus justificationibus Jesu Christi.*” A similar excerpt can be found, at the middle of the 2nd century, at Justin Martyr [*The First Apology* xv, in *The Writings of Justin Martyr and Athenagoras*, eds. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, trans. Marcus Dods George Reith and B.P. Pratten, (Ante-Nicene Christian Library) 2 (Edinburgh: Clark: 1892), p. 18]: “And many, both men and women, who have been Christ’s disciples from childhood, remain pure (‘ἄφθοροι’) at the age of sixty or seventy years; and I boast that I could produce such from every race of men.”

16 *De ss. Epicteto presb.* I.5–6, p. 541: “*Veni ergo, mi nate, et resque ea, quae in mundo hoc habentur, ... Ista enim omnia, quae hic intuentur, transitoria sunt et peritura; ... Veni ergo, et audi me, fili dulcissime, et ego tibi ostendo, quale aurum tibi est eligendum, vel quale argentum sit concupiscendum, ... Aurum ergo hoc ignitum probatum, Christus Dominus noster est.*”

17 *De ss. Epicteto presb.* IV.45, p. 550: “*portionem mihi de tua substantia obtingentem, pro mea requie ac tua salute pauperibus divide ac distribue.*”

If you fully believe in Jesus Christ, our Lord and God ... share all your fortune to the poor, [and] you will undoubtedly live and enjoy the eternal happiness where I am.¹⁸

This excerpt can be regarded as a reflection of the exhortations that the two martyrs had addressed during their lifetime to some of those to whom they preached the Christian faith in Halmyris. The document also refers to the spiritual fortune that Vigilantius, one of the judges in Halmyris, converted to Christianity during the process of the two martyrs, received from Astion. When Astion's parents (Alexander and Marcellina) asked Vigilantius to explain to them which was the treasure under discussion, he showed them the cross and the Gospel of Jesus Christ (*'dominicam Crucem et sacrosanctum Euangelium Christi'*), as well as the tomb with the bodies of the two martyrs.¹⁹

Important for the current analysis is also the relation that extended between the two martyrs, expressed in several places within the document. At the end of their first meeting, Astion is said to have fallen at Epictet's feet, asking to be accepted with him to serve God together.²⁰ From that moment, Astion had continuously followed Epictet for seventeen years, as a disciple (*'discipulus'*), cultivating obedience to him until the last moment of his life:

all those that were present [at their beheading], watching, Christians and pagans together, with tears in their eyes glorified God for the good teacher Epictet and for the perfect obedience of his disciple [Astion].²¹

Another excerpt points to the reason for this 'obedience' (*'oboedientia'*) of the young disciple to his tutor. The detailing of this aspect relates to the account that Astion had gone to take water from the Danube without the approval (*'commendatio'*) of his spiritual father and, as a result of this disobedience, he had been tempted by a devil for a long time. Confessing his deed to Epictet, the priest told him: "Don't you know that there is always the approval of

18 *De ss. Epicteto presb.* IV.46, p. 550: "*Si credideris perfecte in Jesum Christum, Dominum ac Deum nostrum ... atque omnia bona tua distribueris indigentibus, sine dubio et vivere et exultare habes mecum in illa, in qua et ego dego, beatitudine sempiterna.*"

19 *De ss. Epicteto presb.* IV.37 and 43-44, pp. 548 and 550.

20 *De ss. Epicteto presb.* I.8, p. 542.

21 *De ss. Epicteto presb.* III.31, p. 547: "... *intuentes universi, qui aderant, Christiani pariter ac gentiles, de bono magistro Epicteto, ac de perfecta discipuli obedientia, cum lacrymis Deo gratias retulerunt.*"

the elder for the youth, as an invincible wall and as a shield of faith to defeat the devil?"²²

In what concerns their daily activities, prayer and preaching the Christian faith were at the center. One of the paragraphs mentions that Epictet was alone in his cell saying as usually ('*sibi solito*') his prayers to Christ.²³ Then, after being arrested, when in prison, they both spent all the night in vigil ('*vigilia*'), saying psalms and prayers, according to their habit: "And after being locked in prison, they spent all night as usually, in psalms and in prayers. And after accomplishing the solemnity of the vigil ..."²⁴

Their preaching of the Christian faith is confirmed through their words and by the narrator. In the prayer the two martyrs said before being beheaded, they mentioned the preaching of the Gospel as one of the purposes for which Jesus Christ guided their steps to Roman Scythia: "That brought us, your humble and sinful servants, in this country, to announce and to preach the teaching of your Gospel to those who live in it."²⁵

Even if many of the excerpts quoted or referred to above show a mentality and a language specific to a period later than the beginning of the 4th century, they permit the intuition of the two martyrs' ascetic type of living, characterized mainly by the tutor-disciple relationship (involving obedience), by chastity and poverty. However, despite this way of living, the same document shows that the martyrs had not left the world completely. Their dwelling place, even

22 *De ss. Epicteto presb.* II.17, p. 544: "*An ignoras, quia commendatio Praepositi semper junioribus murus inexpugnabilis et lorica fidei, ad superandum diabolum existit?*"

23 *De ss. Epicteto presb.* I.2, p. 540: "*dum solus sua in cella resideret, ac solitas orationes Christo exhiberet.*"

24 *De ss. Epicteto presb.* III.19, p. 544: "*Cumque ingressi fuissent in carcerem, totam noctem more sibi solito, in psalmis et orationibus transegerunt. Post expletam autem vigiliarum solemnitatem,*"

25 *De ss. Epicteto presb.* III.28, p. 546: "*Qui nos humillimos et peccatores famulos tuos ad hanc patriam perduxisti, ut annuntiemus in ea, ac praedicemus Euangelii tui doctrinam his, qui in ea habitant.*" The implication in the missionary activity is one of the characteristics specific to Syro-Mesopotamian monasticism, which at the beginning influenced also Asia Minor (see Solignac, "Monachisme," col. 1661). Moreover, the hagiographical text mentions many times the motif of the pearl (see *De ss. Epicteto presb.* I.5, 10–11; IV.35–36, pp. 541–542 and 548), another possibly Syro-Mesopotamian influence [on this, see Antoine Guillaumont, *Aux origines du monachisme chrétien: pour une phénoménologie du monachisme*, 2nd ed., (Spiritualité orientale) 30 (Paris: Cerf, 2019), p. 108, n. 1]. Unlike Syro-Mesopotamian monasticism, in the Egyptian one the mission was neglected in favour of the isolation—see Iohannes Cassianus, *Conlationes XXIII* XXIV.13.4, ed. Michael Petschenig, (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum) 13/2 (Vienna: C. Gerold's Sohn, 1886), p. 689^{9–17}; John Cassian, *The Conferences* XXIV.13.4, trans. Edgar C.S. Gibson, (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers) 11/11 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1994), p. 1376.

if described by the Latin term '*cella*' ('cell'), was situated in one of the neighbourhoods of the city.²⁶ The document specifies that they found a dwelling suitable for their living as soon as they arrived in Halmyris ('*mansiones sibi aptas invenissent*').²⁷ Nestor Vornicescu considered that it was a dwelling situated outside the Roman castrum, in the sailors' area.²⁸ This aspect, corroborated with the ascetic features of their life (chastity, poverty, obedience, life of prayer) previously shown, permits the inclusion of Epictet and Astion in the category of the ascetics living on the outskirts of towns or villages. They are the first such ascetics in Roman Scythia as attested in documents (years 287–304). The term '*monachus*' in the *Passion* is very likely based on the ascetic aspects of their living, being less important if it existed from the beginning in the document or was inserted later.

On the other hand, it is to be noticed that there is no mention in the *Passion* of the adoption of their lifestyle by any of the Christians in Halmyris or in the region, even though they had lived there for almost seventeen years and their style of living, as already shown, was admired by the local population.²⁹ The document mentions only the conversion to Christianity of some of the locals, but not also the adoption of the same type of living by any of them. Moreover, there is no mention of any monastery in the region, built to the memory of the two 'monks,' even though the final redaction of the *Passion* is dated in a period (the end of the 4th century) when monasticism was wide spread in Scythia.

No other literary information is known about the ascetic movement in Roman Scythia in the last part of the 3rd and first half of the 4th century. Nevertheless, some of the archaeological discoveries in the province, which will be presented in another subchapter, could be related to it. This is the case with a small cave at Dobruja Gorge (Casian Cave), identified in 1984. The

26 The Latin '*cella*' is used three times within the hagiographic text. First, it designated Epictet's dwelling in Asia Minor (*De ss. Epicteto presb.* 1.2, p. 540). In the other two cases, the term indicated the dwelling in Halmyris of the two martyrs (*De ss. Epicteto presb.* 11.17; 14.37, pp. 544 and 548). The use of this term by the author of the *Passion* was undoubtedly determined by the ascetic features of the two martyrs' living, and not by the small dimensions of their dwelling. Moreover, in another fragment of the text, intended to show only the small dimensions of a dwelling, the collocation '*parvissimus domicilium*' ('very small room') was used instead of '*cella*' (*De ss. Epicteto presb.* 14.32, p. 547).

27 *De ss. Epicteto presb.* 11.12, p. 543. Nestor Vornicescu ("Una dintre primele scrieri," p. 63) considered this excerpt to have been part of the original text of the *Passion*.

28 Vornicescu, "Una dintre primele scrieri," p. 48.

29 Before their martyrdom, Epictet, addressing Astion, tells him: "*Hodie namque decem et septem annos per divinam gratiam munus castum immaculatumque te servavi.*" ("I have preserved you until now for seventeen years, by the Holy Grace, as a pure and stainless gift.")—*De ss. Epicteto presb.* 111.30, p. 546.

ceramic remains found inside it proved that the cave had been used from the beginning of the 4th century. Some of the small crosses incised on its walls related to this dwelling. It may have been used as a refuge for Christians during the persecution of Diocletian and, later, as a place of retreat for certain ascetics in the region. If the last hypothesis is correct, then they also belong to the category of dwellings of the ascetics living on the outskirts of a settlement, as a small village or a *villa rustica* was in existence next to the cave at that time.³⁰

Scythia was also a transit territory and, possibly, even a destination for Christian missionaries arriving from the eastern provinces of the empire. The moral profile of the missionaries was similar to that of the ascetics. From this point of view, many of them must have resembled the martyrs Epictet and Astion. Some of these missionaries may have been even monks. In the correspondence between Basil the Great and Vetrano of Tomi carried in 373–374, the latter mentioned the case of a Cappadocian missionary named Euty chius, who had preached Christianity in the Lower Danube.³¹ His activity could be dated between 332 and the first part of the reign of Constantius II (337–361). In 332, Constantine the Great and Ariaric, the leader of the Goths, concluded a *foedus* that created favorable conditions for the activity of Roman Christian missionaries in trans-Danubian Gothia.³² At the same time, as shown by the response letter (no. 164) of Basil the Great to Vetrano, Euty chius had carried

30 See below, subchapter 13.1: 'Casian Cave.'

31 Basil of Caesarea, *Letters* 164.2, 2, trans. Roy J. Deferrari, (Loeb Classical Library) 215 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1926), pp. 424–425. In the extant manuscripts, letters 164 and 165 of Basil the Great are addressed to Bishop Ascholius of Thessalonica. Nevertheless, their contents show that the addressee was actually a hierarch of a Roman province neighbouring the trans-Danubian Gothia, who was directly involved in the transfer to Cappadocia of the relics of Saint Sabas. Based on this information, he was identified by most of the scholars as Vetrano of Tomi—Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, trans. Thomas J. Dunlap (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1988), p. 83; Emilian Popescu, "Qui est l'auteur de l'Acte du martyre de Saint Sabas « Le Goth »?" in *Études byzantines et post-byzantines*, 4, eds. Emilian Popescu and Tudor Teoteoi (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2001), pp. 7–17; Peter Heather and John Matthews, *The Goths in the Fourth Century*, 2nd ed., (Translated Texts for Historians) 11 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004), pp. 110–113; Mario Girardi, *Saba il Goto—martire di frontiera. Testo, traduzione e commento del dossier greco* (Iași: Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2009), p. 33.

32 Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, pp. 61–62; Evangelos Chrysos, "Gothia Romana. Zur Rechtslage des Föderatenlandes der Westgoten im 4. Jh." *Dacoromania. Jahrbuch für Östliche Latinität* 1 (1973), pp. 53–64; Emilian Popescu, "Creștinismul în eparhia Buzăului până în secolul al VII-lea" [Christianity in the Diocese of Buzău until the 7th Century], in *Spiritualitate și istorie la Întorsura Carpaților*, 1, ed. Antonie Plămădeală (Buzău: Episcopia Buzăului, 1983), pp. 263–264.

out his activity before the adoption of the Arianism and the persecution of the Catholics in the empire by the authorities of Constantinople.³³

In what concerns the image of Eutychius in Roman Scythia, the words of Basil the Great show that he had made a special impression. Together with the other missionaries like him, he may have contributed to the strengthening of the ascetic movement in the Lower Danube territories and to the crystallization of the first forms of monastic life in the region.

Moreover, the value of ascetic life in Scythia since the first half of the 4th century is proved by the attestation there of a Novatians' bishopric. Even if the only known hierarch leading it (Mark) is confirmed in documents toward the middle of the 5th century (in 438),³⁴ its foundation must have taken place in the first quarter of the 4th century at the latest, after the end of the anti-Christian persecutions, as a result of some of the Scythian Christians' discontent with the readmission of the lapsi to communion. The event reveals the existence of a quite strong rigoristic trend in the province at that time, the Novatians being renowned for their strict discipline. It is possible for some of the Scythian Novatians to have embraced ascetic life, such cases being known, as already shown, on Mount Olympus in Bithynia (the Novatian anchorite Eutychianus and his disciple Auxanon).³⁵ The accounts of the church historians Socrates and Sozomen show that many Christians (sometimes also hierarchs) of the Catholic Church admired the Novatians.³⁶ This admiration was justified through their pure living and some of their clergy members' fame as wonder-workers, but also through their suffering from the Arians, like the Catholics. In what concerns Scythia, the strict life of the Novatians may have stimulated some of the Catholic Christians in the province to adopt a similar living. Furthermore, the Novatians may have founded monasteries in the province back from the 4th century.

33 Basil of Caesarea, *Letters* 164.2, pp. 424–425.

34 Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* VII.46.10, in *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Christian Hansen Günther, (Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller) 1 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995), p. 394²⁻³; trans. Chester D. Hartranft, (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers) 11/2 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 448.

35 See above, chapter 8: 'A historical survey of Eastern monasticism.'

36 Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* IV.9.1–7, p. 236¹¹⁻²⁷; trans., p. 254; IV.28.1, p. 263¹⁷⁻²¹; trans., p. 286; VII.17.1–15, pp. 361²⁶⁻³⁶²³²; trans., pp. 405–406; VII.39.1–10, pp. 388²²⁻³⁸⁹¹⁶; trans., p. 441; VII.46.1–4, p. 393³⁻¹⁰; trans., p. 448; Sozomenos, *Historia ecclesiastica* IV.20.2–8, in *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Christian Hansen Günther, (Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller) 4 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995), pp. 170⁷⁻¹⁷¹⁸; trans. Chester D. Hartranft, (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers) 11/2 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1979), pp. 702–703; VI.9.1–3, pp. 248¹²⁻²⁴⁹²; trans., p. 782; VIII.1.8–15, pp. 348⁹⁻³⁴⁹²⁰; trans., pp. 892–893.

Based on the above analysis, it can be concluded that the pre-monastic movement is attested through documents in the Istro-Pontic territory. The martyrs Epictet and Astion belong to the category of ascetics living on the outskirts of towns or villages. Their motivation for ascetic life in the region seems to have been quite limited, however. Other missionary ascetics, such as Eutychius, mentioned by Basil the Great, are supposed to have come to the region. Eutychius was vividly remembered for a while, most probably due to the life and mission carried out there. Due to the lack of more detailed information, it is difficult to appreciate how much his example contributed to the growth of the local pre-monastic movement. Some Christian ascetics may have lived in Casian Cave from Dobruja Gorge since the first half of the 4th century. It is also possible that Novatian ascetics lived in the province at that time.

The Audians

Institutionalized monasticism has been attested in Roman Scythia in the middle of the 4th century. The information is related to the Mesopotamian monk Audius, exiled in the province during the reign of Constantius II (337–361).¹ The event took place shortly after the Synod of Antioch in 341 and was motivated by the troubles caused by Audius and his followers in the East.²

One of the erroneous teachings of the Audians was anthropomorphism. They believed that humans' resemblance to God referred to the body and stated that God has human form. Moreover, the Audians differed from the Catholic Church by celebrating Easter on 14 Nissan, at the same time as the Jews, even if they observed the Christian meaning of the religious feast. Finally,

1 On Audius and his movement, see A. Régnier, "Audée," in *Dictionnaire d'Histoire et de Géographie ecclésiastiques*, 5, eds. A. de Meyer and Ét. van Cauwenbergh (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1931), col. 299–300; Henri-Charles Puech, "Audianer," in *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*, 1, eds. Franz Joseph Dölger, Theodor Klauser, and Ernst Dassmann (Stuttgart: Hiersemann, 1950), col. 910–915; Ioan Rămureanu, "Mișcarea audienilor în Dacia Pontică și Nord-dunăreană (sec. IV–VI)" [The Audianism in Pontic and Trans-Danubian Dacia (4th–6th Centuries)], *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 96 (1978), nos. 9–10, pp. 1053–1070; Tito Orlandi, "Audiens," in *Dictionnaire Encyclopédique du Christianisme Ancien*, 1, eds. Angelo Di Bernardino and François Vial (Paris: Cerf, 1990), p. 296; Mihai-Ovidiu Cățoi, "Rectifications et compléments à la chronologie du mouvement audien dans l'Empire Romain et au Bas-Danube," *Ephemeris Dacoromana* 17 (2015), pp. 191–218; Daniel Weisser, *Quis maritus salvetur? Untersuchungen zur Radikalisierung des Jungfräulichkeitsideals im 4. Jahrhundert* (Berlin/Boston, Massachusetts: De Gruyter, 2016), pp. 158–163; Ionuț Holubeanu, "Câteva precizări privind cronologia mișcării audiene" [Some Clarifications on the Chronology of the Audian Movement], in *Istorie, cultură și mărturisire creștină în societatea europeană. Conferința internațională Biserica Ortodoxă, Statul și Societatea Românească, ediția a III-a, Constanța, 24–25 mai 2021*, ed. Constantin-Claudiu Cotan (Bucharest: Editura Universitară, 2021), pp. 346–361.

2 The documentary information on the date of Audius' exile is contradictory. Epiphanius of Salamis (*Panarion* LXX.14.5) asserted that Audius was banished by Constantine the Great (306–337). Conversely, Jerome (*Chronicon* ad CCLXXX Olymp.) stated that Audius was considered important in Coele-Syria at 341. This means that he was still in Syria at that time. In the same year, the Synod of Antioch condemned those celebrating Easter on 14 Nissan (canon 1), as Audians did, and settled the punishment of those who persist in troubling and disturbing the Church (canon 5), by the civil power. Moreover, the Synod of Antioch was also attended by Constantius II and it seems that in this particular context the Syrian bishops obtain Audius' exile. Regarding Epiphanius' statement, it seems to be an altered tradition that the bishop of Salamis found out about from the Audian refugees in Cyprus—see Holubeanu, "Câteva precizări," pp. 346–361.

they had introduced certain defamatory practices in the sacrament of the confession and used various apocryphal texts in their cultic practice.³

Despite these deviations, the Audians' group did not adhere to the Arian heresy. Its followers preserved the Nicene faith regarding the consubstantiality of the persons of the Trinity. For this reason, Epiphanius of Salamis, who provided most of the data on the Audians, did not consider them heretics, but schismatics.⁴ This tolerant attitude of the bishop of Salamis was most probably motivated also by the pure and austere life led by Audius and his followers.

In *Panarion*, Epiphanius also left a short description of the Audians' lifestyle, stating that:

They [i.e., the Audians] have withdrawn from the world and reside in monasteries (ἐν μοναστηρίοις)—in deserts and, nearer the cities, in suburbs, and wherever they have their residences, or “folds” (μάνδρας). ... He instructed many Goths, and many monasteries therefore arose in Gothia itself, and the religious life, virginity and an ascetic discipline of no mean order.⁵

As can be noticed, Epiphanius used the terms ‘μοναστήριον’ (‘monastery’) and ‘μάνδρα’ (‘fold’) when referring to the Audians' dwelling places. These terms lead to the conclusion that the settlements were monasteries in the current meaning of the word.⁶ Moreover, the use of ‘μάνδρα’ shows that they had the classical form of coenobia, composed of a chapel and the monks' cells, all surrounded by a wall. The latter had been proposed by Pachomius the Great after

3 Régnier, “Audée,” col. 299; Rămureanu, “Mișcarea audienilor,” pp. 1053–1061.

4 Epiphanius Salaminis, *Panarion* LXX, vol. 3, ed. Karl Holl, (Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller) 37 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1933), p. 230⁴; Epiphanius of Salamis, *Panarion. Books II and III. De fide*, 2nd ed., trans. Frank Williams, (Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies) 79 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2013), p. 412.

5 Epiphanius Salaminis, *Panarion* LXX.11 and 14.5, pp. 232¹⁷–233¹ and 247^{29–31}; trans., pp. 412–413 and 426.

6 In the old Christian texts, the term ‘μοναστήριον’ (‘monastery’) is used with a double meaning. It could designate the settlement where many monks lived together or just the dwelling (cell) of one monk—see Iohannes Cassianus, *Conlationes* XXVIII XVIII.10, ed. Michael Petschenig, (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum) 13/2 (Vienna: C. Gerold's Sohn, 1886), p. 517^{9–17}; John Cassian, *The Conferences* XVIII.10, trans. Edgar C.S. Gibson, (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers) 11/11 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1994), p. 1235; Geoffrey William Hugo Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, 12th ed. (Chippinham: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 878. The use of ‘μάνδρα’ (‘fold’) (Lampe, *A Patristic Greek Lexicon*, pp. 825–826) in this excerpt, for the Audians' settlements, indicates the fact that the meaning of ‘μοναστήριον’ is that of a dwelling place for many monks, and not that of a cell.

the model of those who surrounded the military camps⁷ and had been adopted by other organizers of coenobitic monastic life, as well.⁸ It leads to the conclusion that the Audians' monasteries belonged to the category of coenobia, in which monks lived, prayed, worked, and ate together, under the spiritual guidance of the hegumen.

The Audians' daily program seems to have been similar to that of the other contemporary monks. Epiphanius indirectly mentions the work and prayer practiced in the settlements of the Audians. Regarding prayer, the hierarch of Salamis points out that the Audians refused to pray together with those that preserved the communion with the Catholic Church, even if they were morally acceptable.⁹ In what concerns work, Epiphanius states that Audius, the bishops, the priests, and the rest of his followers earned their living from the work of their own hands.¹⁰

Regarding the place of the Audian monasteries, the words of the hierarch of Salamis show that this aspect was not very important for the members of the community. Some of their settlements were situated in desert places, others close to cities or even in their suburbs. The building of some of them close to cities must have been motivated by the missionary activity they carried out. The building of others in isolated places responded most probably to the wish of the most zealous of them to live in as much isolation from the world as possible.

Epiphanius openly expressed his admiration for the Audians' living: "In fact this body is absolutely < outstanding > in its admirable conduct, and all their

7 *The First Greek Life of Pachomius* 42 and 81, in Armand Veilleux, trans. and introd., *Pachomian Koinonia*, 1, (Cistercian Studies Series) 45 (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1980), pp. 326 and 352–353; *The Rules of Saint Pachomius* 84, in Armand Veilleux, trans. and introd., *Pachomian Koinonia*, 2, (Cistercian Studies Series) 46 (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1981), p. 160. See also Derwas James Chitty, *The Desert a City: An Introduction to the Study of Egyptian and Palestinian Monasticism under the Christian Empire*, 3rd ed. (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimirs' Seminary Press, 1999), pp. 22 and 102–104; Joseph Patrich, *Sabas, Leader of Palestinian Monasticism: A Comparative Study in Eastern Monasticism, Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, (Dumbarton Oaks Studies) 32 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1995), p. 20.

8 Fidus the deacon, turning the laura of Euthymius the Great in a coenobium, surrounded the new monastic complex with defensive walls; see Cyril of Scythopolis, *Lives of the Monks of Palestine*, trans. Richard M. Price, introd. John Binns (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1991), p. 61. See also Chitty, *The Desert a City*, pp. 102–103.

9 Epiphanius Salaminis, *Panarion* LXX.15.1, p. 248¹⁻⁴; trans., pp. 426–427.

10 Epiphanius Salaminis, *Panarion* LXX.2.2, pp. 233³¹–234²; trans., p. 413.

customs are well regulated in their monasteries, ...”¹¹ The value of these appreciations is all the greater as Epiphanius knew monastic life very well: he had lived among the monks in Egypt in his youth; later, in Palestine, he had had Hilarion the Great as a monastic mentor; he had founded Old Ad coenobium (c.335) in the region of Eleutheropolis (Palestine), and was perceived by his contemporaries as a monastic leader.¹² Moreover, according to his testimony, he had personally met some of the Audians at the time when they had taken refuge from Gothia to Cyprus, where they had lived for four years.¹³

The Cypriot hierarch did not affirm anywhere that the Audians founded monasteries in Scythia. He mentioned the building of some in trans-Danubian Gothia, after Audius and his followers had left the Istro-Pontic province. In that context, remembering their missionary activity in the territories on the left of the Danube, Epiphanius specified that they converted many of the Goths to Christianity “and many monasteries therefore arose in Gothia itself.”¹⁴

When referring to the time Audius in Scythia spent, the hierarch of Salamis only mentioned that there were several years.¹⁵ The available data indicates approximately 7–8 years. As already mentioned, Audius’ exile took place most probably after the Synod of Antioch in 341. On the other hand, *Panarion* shows that the Audians suffered in trans-Danubian Gothia from only one persecution (that of Athanaric, over 367–378). In this case, Audius must have been still in Scythia during the persecution of Aoric in 347–348, and must have left the Roman province shortly after the end of this persecution. His wish to move to the region left of the Danube may have been due to the contact with some of the Christian Goths that had taken refuge in Scythia during the persecution of Aoric. Therefore, the time the Mesopotamian monk spent in the Istro-Pontic province may be appreciated approximately to the interval between 341 and 349.

11 Epiphanius Salaminis, *Panarion* LXX.14.6, p. 247³¹⁻³²: “ἔστι γὰρ τῶ ὄντι τοῦτο τὸ τάγμα πάνυ ἐν ἀναστροφῇ θαυμαστῇ καὶ τὰ πάντα αὐτῶν ἐν τοῖς αὐτῶν μοναστηρίοις καλῶς φέρεται, ...” trans., p. 413.

12 Andrew S. Jacobs, *Epiphanius of Cyprus: A Cultural Biography of Late Antiquity*, (North American Patristics Society: Christianity in Late Antiquity) 2 (Oakland, California: University of California Press, 2016), pp. 1–64; Patrich, *Sabas*, p. 6; Ioan G. Coman, *Patrologie* [Patrology], 3 (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1988), p. 575.

13 Epiphanius Salaminis, *Panarion* LXX.15.5, p. 248²⁵⁻²⁷; trans., p. 427.

14 Epiphanius Salaminis, *Panarion* LXX.14.5, p. 247²⁹⁻³⁰: “καὶ μοναστήρια ἐν τῇ αὐτῇ Γοθθία ἐγένετο.” trans., p. 426.

15 Epiphanius Salaminis, *Panarion* LXX.14.5, p. 247²⁷⁻²⁸; trans., p. 426: “ἐκεῖ δὲ μάλιστα διατρίβων (χρόνον ἐτῶν οὐκ ἔχω λέγειν) ...” (“He lived there [in Scythia] for the most part—I cannot say for how many years”).

Despite this quite long period spent by Audius in Scythia, Epiphanius says nothing about the conversion of any of the Roman province's inhabitants by him and his followers. The Cypriot hierarch's silence suggests that Audius' missionary activity was irrelevant or even non-existent there. This hypothesis seems totally credible given that by his exile status, he must have been under the supervision of civil and church authorities.¹⁶ The first mentioned ones had been informed, most probably, about the revolts provoked by Audius and his followers in the East. At the same time, the zealous Tomitan hierarchs would have organized his strict supervision in order to prevent the spread of erroneous teachings and practices in the province. The limitation of Audius' freedom of action in Scythia may have been one of the factors that determined him to move to trans-Danubian Gothia. It is there, in complete liberty, that he could satisfy his missionary zeal, by converting numerous Goths to Christianity.¹⁷

To conclude, without excluding the possibility of the organization of a coenobium in Scythia, where Audius and his followers may have lived while they were exiled, the organization of a monastic network there is less probable. It is not supported by the words of Epiphanius, who asserts that Audius founded monasteries in Gothia (without mentioning Scythia), by the latter's status of exiled in the Roman province, nor by his decision to leave this territory.¹⁸

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- 16 Radu Mișu ["Monahismul daco-roman" (Daco-Roman Monasticism), in *Monahismul ortodox românesc: istorie, contribuții și repertorizare*, 1, eds. Mircea Păcurariu and Nicolae Edroiu (Bucharest: Basilica, 2014), p. 293] supposed that Audius' residence was established in one of the Scythian settlements on the Danube shore.
- 17 Robert Born [*Die Christianisierung der Städte der Provinz Scythia Minor ein Beitrag zum spätantiken Urbanismus auf dem Balkan*, (Spätantike—Frühes Christentum—Byzanz. Reihe B, Studien und Perspektiven) 36 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2012), p. 132] argues for an Audian episcopal network in Scythia, which included three bishops who resided in the cities of the province. However, it appears from Epiphanius' text that those bishops ruled in Gothia and Mesopotamia, but not in Scythia.
- 18 The foundation of monasteries in Roman Scythia by Audius and his followers is accepted by Ioan G. Coman ["Contribuția scriitorilor patristici din Scythia Minor—Dobrogea la Patrimoniul ecumenismului creștin în secolele al IV-lea—al V-lea" (The Contribution of the Patristic Writers in Scythia Minor—Dobruja to the Heritage of Christian Ecumenism in the 4th–5th Centuries), *Ortodoxia* 20 (1968), no. 1, pp. 7, 16, and 25; *Scriitori bisericești din epoca străromână* (Church Writers from the Proto-Romanian Era) (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1979), p. 80], Emilian Popescu [*Christianitas Daco-Romana. Florilegium studiorum* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1994), p. 222], Epifanie Norocel [*Pagini din istoria veche a creștinismului la români. Mărturii ale continuității poporului nostru* (Pages of the Early History of Romanian Christianity. Testimonies of the Continuity of Our People) (Buzău: Editura Episcopiei Buzăului, 1986), p. 76], Nicolae Chițescu ["Introducere generală" (General Introduction), in *Sfântul Ioan Casian, Scieri alese: Așezămintele mânăstirești, Convorbiri duhovnicești și Despre întruparea Domnului* (St. John Cassian, *Writings: Institutes, Conferences, and On the Incarnation of the Lord*), trans. Vasile Cojocaru

In what concerns the impact of the Audian type of living on local ascetic life, it must have been quite reduced. It must not be totally excluded that some of the Christians in Scythia who knew them directly may have been impressed by their ascetic life and, thus, may have adopted a stricter lifestyle themselves. As already shown, Epiphanius of Salamis himself was impressed by the life of the Audians he met. In such a case, it may be admitted that the group of Audians could have contributed, to some extent, to the stimulation of ascetic life among the Christians in the province.

Even if their contribution to the development of monastic life in Roman Scythia seems to have been irrelevant, the Audians are the first monks attested through documents in the province. The literary and archaeological information available at present does not indicate the existence there of any other monastic group before the second half of the 4th century. Only some local ascetics supposed to have lived in the Casian Cave of Dobruja Gorge are contemporary with the Audians in Scythia.¹⁹ It is possible that other local ascetics living not far from lay settlements have existed in the southern part of the province on the Sukha Reka and Dobrich Valleys.²⁰

and David Popescu, eds. Dumitru Soare et al., (Părinți și scriitori bisericești) 57 (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1990), p. 38], and Georgi Atanasov ["Les monastères rupestres le long de la rivière Suha, dans la région de Dobrudja de Sud," *Byzantinoslavica* 69 (2011), p. 207].

19 See below, subchapter 13.1: 'Casian Cave.'

20 See below, subchapter 13.5.10: 'The dating of the cave monastic complexes on Sukha Reka and Dobrich Valleys.'

Monasticism in Scythia in the Second Half of the 4th Century

From the second half of the 4th century onward, there is more information about monastic life in Roman Scythia. Even if most of it is archaeological,¹ there is also information provided through written sources. The present chapter focuses on the latter, referring mainly to John Cassian and Theotimus 1 of Tomi. It will also approach the relations between Scythia and Cappadocia at the time of Vetrano of Tomi, the way in which they impacted Istro-Pontic monastic life, as well as a short evaluation of the archaeological discoveries of Niculițel (Romania).

11.1 Scythian Monasticism in the Time of John Cassian

There is no agreement among scholars regarding the birthplace of John Cassian. From the hypotheses advanced over time [Thrace or the Balkans, Africa, Athens, Provence (France), Syria, Roman Scythia, Scythopolis (Palestine), a Syro-Chaldean from Triganocerta/Serta in Gordyene, Constantinople or, more recently, an Armenian of the Andjewatsi lineage]² two gained ground: Roman Scythia and Provence.³ Although the weight of modern scholarly

1 See below, chapter 13: 'Monasteries on the territory between the Danube and the Black Sea during 4th–7th centuries AD.'

2 The hypothesis stating that John Cassian may have been an Armenian of the Andjewatsi lineage was launched recently by Maxime K. Yevadian ["Sur la patrie de Jean Cassien et la tradition manuscrite du *De viris illustribus* de Gennade de Marseille," *Provence Historique* 62 (2013), fasc. 253, pp. 373–401, and fasc. 255, pp. 41–84]. It is based on the reading of Gennadius' words '*Cassianus natione Scythia*' as '*natione Serta*,' rejected at present by most of the scholars.

3 The following voices are in favour of Scythia: Lenain de Tillemont (1709), Sebastian Merkle (1900), Otto Bardenhewer (1908), Louis Duchesne (1910), Fernand Cabrol (1910), Herbert B. Workman (1913), Eduard Schwartz (1914), Pierre Pourrat (1922), Beresford James Kidd (1922), Pierre de Labriolle (1924), Henri-Irénée Marrou (1945), Eugène Pichery (1955), Jean-Claude Guy (1961), Alexandru N. Constantinescu (1964), Ioan G. Coman (1979), Owen Chadwick (1985), Colm Luibheid (1985), Johannes Quasten (1987), Antonie Plămădeală (1989), Theodor Damian (1991), Emilian Popescu (1994), Dan Ruscu (2010), Radu Mișu (2014), etc. In favour of Provence plead: Lukas Holste (1663), Enrico Noris (1673), Louis F. Meyer (1840), Carl Paucker (1886), Michael Peschening (1888), Ernest Spreitzenhofer (1894),

opinion seems to favor the former, the latter still has advocates.⁴ As this issue is of great interest for the analysis in this subchapter, the main arguments supporting the two hypotheses are presented below.⁵

The following arguments are invoked in favour of Roman Scythia:

1a. The testimony of Gennadius of Massilia (†c.496), written less than half a century after Cassian's death, according to whom '*Cassianus natione Scythia*.'⁶ This mention is interpreted by most of the supporters of the Scythic origin as Cassian from the Roman Scythia. The argument is contested in two ways. Certain scholars invoked that the reading '*Scythia*' is doubtful, some later manuscripts mentioning '*natus Serta*.'⁷ Others admitted the correctness of the reading '*Scythia*,' but the term is seen as a reference to Scetis desert in Egypt, where John Cassian had lived for a while.⁸

Edgar C.S. Gibson (1894), Thomas Scott Holmes (1911), Margaret Smith (1931), Léon Cristiani (1946), Maïeul Cappuyns (1949), Klaus Zelzer (1991), Marie-Anne Vannier (1999) etc.

- 4 Klaus Zelzer, "*Cassianus natione Scythia*, ein Südgallier," *Wiener Studien* 104 (1991), pp. 165–168; Marie-Anne Vannier, "Introduction," in Jean Cassien, *Traité de l'Incarnation Contre Nestorius*, trans. Marie-Anne Vannier, (Sagesses chrétiennes) (Paris: Cerf, 1999), pp. 23–27; Marie-Anne Vannier, "Jean Cassien, Scythe ou Provençal?" in *Anthropos Laïkos. Mélanges Alexandre Faivre à l'occasion de ses 30 ans d'enseignement*, eds. Marie-Anne Vannier, Otto Wermelinger, and Gregor Wurst, (Paradosis. Études de littérature et de théologie anciennes) 44 (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 2000), pp. 323–334.
- 5 On a detailed analysis of the arguments supporting the two hypotheses (Scythia and Provence), see Maïeul Cappuyns, "Cassien (Jean)," in *Dictionnaire d'Histoire et de Géographie ecclésiastiques*, 11, eds. A. de Meyer and Ét. Van Cauwenbergh (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1949), col. 1321–1322; Owen Chadwick, *John Cassian*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1968), pp. 190–198; Theodor Damian, "Some Critical Considerations and New Arguments Reviewing the Problem of St. John Cassian's Birthplace," *Orientalia christiana periodica* 57 (1991), no. 2, pp. 257–280 (where there are some confusions, however, such as the identification of Pontus with Scythia); Vannier, "Introduction," pp. 23–27; Vannier, "Jean Cassien," pp. 323–334; Yevadian, "Sur la patrie de Jean Cassien," fasc. 253, pp. 374–390.
- 6 Gennadius, *Liber de viris illustribus* LXII, ed. Ernest Cushing Richardson, (Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur) 14/1 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1896), p. 827.
- 7 Michael Petschenig, "Prolegomena," (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum) 17/1 (Prague/Vienna: F. Tempsky; Leipzig: G. Freytag, 1888), p. 11; Jean-Baptiste Thibaut, *L'Ancienne Liturgie Gallicane, son origine et sa formation en Provence aux V^e et VI^e siècles sous l'influence de Cassien et de Saint Césaire d'Arles* (Paris: Maison de la Bonne Presse, 1929), p. 104; Yevadian, "Sur la patrie de Jean Cassien," fasc. 253, pp. 392–401.
- 8 Iohannes Cassianus, *Conlationes* XXIII 1.1, ed. Michael Petschenig, (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum) 13/2 (Vienna: C. Gerold's Sohn, 1886), p. 7¹³ (hereafter cited as *Conlationes*); John Cassian, *The Conferences* xviii.6.1–4, trans. Edgar C.S. Gibson, (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers) 11/11 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1994), p. 713: "*Cum in*

2a. The discovery at Dobruja Gorge (in the central area of Roman Scythia, near now Casian village, Grădina commune, Romania), in the former hinterland (*chora*) of the ancient city of Histria (now Istria, Romania), of two rock-cut inscriptions attesting the existence there of a settlement of the Kasians [“ὄροι Κασσιανῶν” (“the boundaries of the Kasians”)]. This is considered the native village of John Cassian (the so-called *vicus Cassiani*). Henri-Irénée Marrou proposed this thesis in 1945.⁹ Meanwhile, archaeological researches in the region completed the general picture: (i.) two boundary stones with inscriptions have been discovered, confirming the existence of Kasiana village [‘Κασσιανά’] there; (ii.) the remains of a village (*vicus*) of the 2nd–3rd centuries AD, contemporary with the inscriptions, have been identified not far from the two rock-cut inscriptions discovered *in situ*; (iii.) the remains of a small settlement or *villa rustica* of the 4th century were archaeologically investigated in the area. An oil lamp with the sign of the cross was discovered among the remains of the settlement/*villa*, which indicates the existence of local Christians. Near the settlement/*villa* there is a rock formation where a cave was found, difficult to access, showing traces of habitation from the 4th–6th and the 10th century, respectively.¹⁰

3a. Henri-Irénée Marrou, who visited Dobruja Gorge area (with arable land crossed by Casimcea River, a spring, wooded ravines, and monumental rock formations), pointed to the resemblance between the landscape of the area and the description made by John Cassian of his native places.¹¹

4a. Scythia was a bilingual province at that time (the second half of the 4th century), the Greek language was mostly spoken in the cities on

heremo Scitti (“When I was in the desert of Scetis”). On *natione Scythia* = Scetis desert in Egypt, see Petschenig, “Prolegomena,” pp. 1111–v; Thomas Scott Holmes, *The Origin and Development of the Christian Church in Gaul during the First Six Centuries of the Christian Era* (London/New York: Macmillan, 1911), p. 294; Léon Cristiani, *Jean Cassien: La spiritualité du désert*, 1, (Figures Monastiques) (Abbaye Saint Wandrille: Editions de Fontenelle, 1946), pp. 40–43; Cappuyens, “Cassien,” col. 1321–1322; Zelzer, “*Cassianus*,” pp. 165–168; Vannier, “Introduction,” p. 26; Vannier, “Jean Cassien,” p. 325.

9 Henri-Irénée Marrou, “La patrie de Jean Cassien,” *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 13 (1947), pp. 588–596.

10 On all these archaeological discoveries, see below, subchapter 13.1: ‘Casian Cave.’

11 *Conlationes* XXIV.1.3, p. 675^{3–8}; trans., p. 1363: “We remembered ... then besides this the very spot, where the ancestral possession of our forefathers was, and the delightful pleasantness of the neighbourhood was painted before our eyes, how pleasantly and suitably it stretched away to the desert, so that the recesses of the woods would not only delight the heart of a monk, but would also furnish him with a plentiful supply of food.”

the Black Sea coastline and Latin in those of the central area and on the Danube shore. This aspect is proved by the inscriptions discovered in the province.¹² This explains why John Cassian knew so well both Latin and Greek. The placing of that Kasiana village in the Latin speaking area of Scythia pleads in favour of Latin as Cassian's mother tongue.

5a. John Cassian's confessions reveal that he had been trained in classical literature during his childhood.¹³ Roman Scythia offered the necessary conditions for such an education. Histria, in whose hinterland was Kasiana village, had an old tradition in education, a gymnasium being attested in documents (3rd–2nd BC), where lectures (*ἀκροάσεις*) were delivered both by local teachers and by others from outside.¹⁴ The prosperous situation of Scythia in the 4th century AD was favorable to the preservation and even the development of the tradition of children and youth education in schools.¹⁵ Moreover, rich families, such as that of Cassian, could entrust the education of their children to private tutors who, most probably, existed in the province.

Other arguments that exclude his Provençal origin:

6a. Gennadius' silence (himself an inhabitant of Marseille) regarding Cassian's Provençal origin is noteworthy. He would have surely highlighted this aspect if John Cassian was his fellow-countryman.¹⁶

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- 12 Emilian Popescu, *Inscripțiile grecești și latine din secolele IV–XIII descoperite în România* [The Greek and Latin Inscriptions from the 4th to 13th Centuries Discovered in Romania] (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1976), *passim*; Emilian Popescu, "Die Inschriften aus Kleinskythien," in *Actes du VII^e Congrès international d'épigraphie grecque et latine, Constantza 9–15 sept. 1977*, ed. Dionisie M. Pippidi (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române; Paris: Société d'édition Les Belles Lettres, 1979), pp. 273–292.
- 13 *Conlationes* XIV.12, p. 414^{6–9}; trans., p. 119: "now my mind is filled with those songs of the poets so that even at the hour of prayer it is thinking about those trifling fables, and the stories of battles with which from its earliest infancy it was stored by its childish lessons."
- 14 Emilian Popescu, "Considerații cu privire la educația tineretului la Histria în legătură cu trei inscripții inedite" [Considerations Regarding the Education of Youth in Histria in Relation to Three Unpublished Inscriptions], *Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche* 7 (1956), nos. 3–4, pp. 343–365; Dionisie M. Pippidi, *Inscripțiile din Scythia Minor, grecești și latine* [The Greek and Latin Inscriptions of Scythia Minor], 1 (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1983), no. 26, pp. 112–115.
- 15 Emilian Popescu, "Frühes mönchtum in Rumänien," in Emilian Popescu, *Christianitas Daco-Romana* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1994), pp. 225–226.
- 16 Sebastian Merkle, "Cassian kein Syrer," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 82 (1900), p. 421; Henri-Irénée Marrou, *Patristique et humanisme: mélanges* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1976), p. 353.

7a. In his preface to *Institutes*, Cassian compares his relation with the Gallic Bishop Castor to that between kings Solomon of Israel and Hiram of Tyre, emphasizing two of Hiram's characteristics: the fact that he was a poor man and a stranger to the people of Israel.¹⁷ Thus, Cassian suggests that he is a foreigner in Provence: as Solomon asked a stranger to the Jewish people (Hiram) to help him build the temple of Jerusalem, in the same way Castor asked Cassian to write *Institutes* (see also below 8b).¹⁸

8a. In the last *Conference* (xxiv), abba Abraham speaks to John Cassian and Germanus about the danger, for a monk, of living too near one's own kinsfolk, suggesting that they had better not return to their home province.¹⁹ John Cassian is supposed to have respected the advice of this abba (see also below).²⁰

9a. Also in the last *Conference*, abba Abraham compares the feeble spread of the Christian faith in Cassian's province with the cold climate there.²¹ Such a climate goes better with Scythia, famous for its cold weather, than with Provence. Certain scholars, contesting this argument, state that Abraham refers strictly to the weak representation of Christianity in Cassian's native province, and not to its harsh climate.²² Others invoked the fact that in the Preface to *Institutes*, Cassian described Provence as a country with a cold climate.²³

The following arguments were invoked in favour of his Provençal origin:

1b. The choice of Marseille city in Provence by John Cassian, when he came to Western Europe, indicates his local origin.²⁴—This argument

17 Iohannes Cassianus, *De Institutis coenobiorum et de octo principalium vitiorum remediis libri XII* praef.1–2, ed. Michael Petschenig, (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum) 17/1 (Prague/Vienna: F. Tempisky; Leipzig: G. Freytag, 1888), pp. 3–4 (hereafter cited as *Instituta*); John Cassian, *The Twelve Books on the Institutes of the Coenobia, and the Remedies for the Eight Principal Faults*, trans. Edgar C.S. Gibson, (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers) 11/11 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1994), p. 400.

18 Chadwick, *John Cassian*, p. 192.

19 *Conlationes* xxiv.1–14, pp. 674–690; trans., pp. 1363–1378.

20 Chadwick, *John Cassian*, pp. 193–194. Contra: Cristiani, *Jean Cassien*, pp. 37–40.

21 *Conlationes* xxiv.8.5, p. 682^{24–25}; trans., p. 1371: “in those regions which, as report says, are frozen, and bound by the cold of excessive unbelief.”

22 D.A. Ménager, “La patrie de Cassien,” *Échos d'Orient* 20 (1921), no. 123, pp. 344–345 and 357.

23 *Instituta* praef.9, p. 7^{4–5}; trans., p. 402: “either because of the severity of the climate, or owing to some difficulty or diversity of habits, is impossible in these countries [i.e., Provence].” See Cappuyns, “Cassien,” col. 1321.

24 Cristiani, *Jean Cassien*, pp. 36–37; Vannier, “Introduction,” p. 24; Vannier, “Jean Cassien,” p. 323.

is in disagreement with the passages mentioned at nos. 7a and 8a (see above). Moreover, his coming to Marseille was also explained in another way: by Cassian's wish to retreat to a region safe from barbarian attacks that shook the Western world at that time and because the Church there was led by Proculus, who favored monastic life.²⁵

2b. Had he not been from Provence, it would have been difficult for him to found two abbeys (Saint Victor and Saint Sauveur) in Marseille.²⁶ Their building supposes a certain social status, sufficient relations and influential friends.²⁷—However, the request addressed by Castor of Apt Julia to write *Institutes* proves the prestige of Cassian in the region not due to his origin, but to his pure life and to his renown of monk that had lived in Egypt. Nevertheless, Marie-Anne Vannier herself (who proposed this argument) considered (at the end of her study) that the bishop of Marseille must have appreciated John Cassian, given that he entrusted him with the building of two monasteries in the city.²⁸

3b. The encounter with his sister, to which he refers in a paragraph of *Institutes* (XI.18), and which he met again in Provence, indicates that this was his native province.²⁹ He built the abbey for women (Saint Sauveur) in Marseilles for his sister, as well.³⁰—Still, there is no mention anywhere that it was for his sister that John Cassian founded the abbey of Saint Sauveur. It is also difficult to say where his sister was at that time (if she was even still alive). Cassian actually only mentions in *Institutes* that he had a sister and suggests that he met her after he had become a monk, without mentioning when and where their meeting took place: after his adoption of monastic life in his native province (if he became a monk there, as some scholars suppose), in their travel together to Palestine and Bethlehem (if she went with him to the Holy Land), in Constantinople (while he was living there), or in Provence (according to the suppositions of the supporters of this argument).³¹ On the other hand, when he admits that he could not avoid meeting his sister after taking the vows, he also mentions that he could not avoid the hand of the bishop, either. It is an allusion to his ordination as a deacon (in Constantinople) and as a

25 Chadwick, *John Cassian*, p. 41.

26 Gennadius, *De viris illustribus* LXII, p. 82⁸⁻¹⁰.

27 Vannier, "Introduction," p. 24; Vannier, "Jean Cassien," p. 323.

28 Vannier, "Jean Cassien," p. 334.

29 Cristiani, *Jean Cassien*, pp. 37–40; Cappuyns, "Cassien," col. 1321.

30 Vannier, "Introduction," p. 26; Vannier, "Jean Cassien," p. 325.

31 *Instituta* XI.18, p. 203¹²⁻¹⁵; trans., p. 670: "I could not avoid my own sister, nor escape the hands of the bishop."

priest (in Rome, most probably), that had taken place before his coming to Marseille.

4b. The native landscape that he described is compatible with the fertile terrain of Provence.³²—This argument is invoked also by those who sustain the other opinion (see above, no. 3a).

5b. John Cassian states that in his native province there are neither monks, nor anchorites.³³ This statement is in agreement with the one in his Preface to the *Institutes*, which indicates that there are no monasteries in the diocese of Apta Iulia in Gallia Narbonensis and with that of *Conferences* (xviii), mentioning that there are no anchorites.³⁴—With these statements, Cassian does not exclude the existence of monastic life, but points to its precarious state, both in his native province (whatever it may have been) and in Provence. Actually, in the case of the latter, Cassian himself mentions in the same Preface that Bishop Castor had already founded a monastery.³⁵ On the other hand, the feeble development of monastic life was at that time characteristic not only of Gallia or Scythia, but also of other provinces in the Balkan Peninsula and even in Asia Minor.

6b. His good knowledge of the Latin language is another argument.³⁶—This is also invoked by the supporters of the other opinion (see above, no. 4a).

7b. In Provence, he could have received a very good classical education during childhood, whereas in Scythia, he could not.³⁷—This aspect is also invoked by the supporters of the other opinion, who reject the

32 Lukas Holste, *Codex regularum monasticarum et canonicarum*, 6 (Augustae Vindelicorum, 1759), p. xi. Also there, Holste suggested that the term *provincia*, used by Cassian in *Conference* xxiv.1 when he mentions his native places [*ad repetendam provinciam nostra*] ('to return to our province'), indicates the name of Provence region. Nevertheless, both there and in other places of the same *Conference*, it is the Latin term *provincia* ('province').

33 *Conlationes* xxiv.18, p. 695¹⁻³; trans., p. 1383: "in our own country, where it is impossible to find anyone, or scarcely anyone who adopts this manner of life [i.e., monastic/anchoritic]."

34 *Instituta* praef.3, p. 4⁸⁻¹⁰; trans., p. 400: "your province [Gallia Narbonensis], which is at present without monasteries." *Conlationes* xviii.praef.3, p. 504⁷; trans., p. 1220: "that way [of anchorites] which is difficult and almost unknown in this country." See Cappuyens, "Cassien," col. 1321.

35 *Instituta* praef.3, p. 4²⁰; trans., p. 401: "the brethren in your [i.e., Castor] new monastery."

36 Carl Paucker, "Die Latinität des Johannes Cassianus," *Romanische Forschungen* 2 (1886), no. 3, pp. 391–448; Petschenig, "Prolegomena," p. 11; Zelzer, "Cassianus," pp. 161–168.

37 Zelzer, "Cassianus," pp. 161–168.

idea that in Scythia it was not possible to receive a good education (see above, no. 5a).

8b. In the comparison Solomon-Hiram / Castor-Cassian in *Institutes* (praef.1–2), Cassian says that Hiram was poor and stranger, whereas about himself he said only that he was poor, not also stranger.³⁸—The supporters of his Scythic origin say that his status of a stranger in Provence can be understood from the wording of the respective phrase (see above, no. 7a).

9b. Marseille is a port on the Mediterranean Sea and, due to maritime trade, from there people could easily reach Alexandria and, farther, Bethlehem. Such a trip would have been much more difficult for someone living in Scythia.³⁹—Considering Scythia as an isolated province, whose inhabitants could not easily reach the eastern provinces of the empire is wrong. In fact, Roman Scythia was a maritime province itself, with ports on the Black Sea (on its eastern side) and on the Danube (on its northern and western sides). From these places it was easy to reach Constantinople and from there, the whole of the Mediterranean space. In the first three quarters of the 4th century AD, Scythia had a very active trading life, as evidenced by literary sources and archaeological discoveries (coins, commercial lead seals, pottery, and inscriptions). And although the trade with the eastern provinces of the empire was less intensive by the turn of the 5th century, it never ceased.⁴⁰ As such, departure to Palestine (via Constantinople) by sea was always possible.

From all these arguments and counter arguments invoked in favour of the two hypotheses, there is one that stands out (together with Gennadius' specification '*natione Scythia*'): that regarding abba Abraham's recommendation addressed to Cassian and Germanus not to go back to their native province. The importance of this advice is based on a fundamental principle of monastic life: acquiring and maintaining peace of mind. At the same time, it is to

38 Cappuyns, "Cassien," col. 1321.

39 Vannier, "Introduction," p. 27; Vannier, "Jean Cassien," p. 325.

40 Ion Barnea, "Relațiile provinciei Scythia Minor cu Asia Mică, Siria și Egiptul" [The Relations of the Province of Scythia Minor with Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt], *Pontica* 5 (1972), pp. 251–265; Alexandru Barnea, "Voies de communication au Bas-Danube aux IV^e–VI^e s. ap. J.C.," in *Études byzantines et post-byzantines*, 3, eds. Emilian Popescu and Tudor Teoteoi (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1997), pp. 37–39; Mihail Zahariade, *Scythia Minor. A History of a Later Roman Province (284–681)* (Amsterdam: Hakkert, 2006), pp. 150–154; Andrei Opaț, *Local and Imported Ceramics in the Roman Province of Scythia (4th–6th Centuries AD). Aspects of Economic Life in the Province of Scythia*, (BAR International Series) 1274 (Oxford: BAR Publishing, 2004), pp. 101–111.

be emphasized that John Cassian, speaking about any advice received, usually specified if it had not been respected, if this was the case. He was very sincere from this point of view. Thus, he confessed that he did not obey the advice to avoid the hand of the bishop and the meeting with any woman (see above, no. 3b). In another place, he confessed having returned from Egypt to Bethlehem to obtain the blessing of his abbot there in order to settle in Scetis, even if abba Joseph had told him that there was no need to do that.⁴¹ Therefore, if John Cassian had infringed in any way the recommendation of abba Abraham, he would have most probably specified this aspect. However, such a mention is nowhere to be found. This argument is supported by the parallel Solomon-Hiram / Castor-Cassian (see above, nos. 7a and 8b), which shows that he considered himself a stranger in Provence. At the same time, it annuls the main argument invoked in favour of Cassian's Provençal origin: his coming to his native land (see above, no. 1b).

Weighing the arguments invoked by the supporters of the two opinions, we consider that those invoked in favour of Scythia are stronger. Based on this conclusion, John Cassian's references to the situation of monasticism in his native province are interpreted as coming from a former inhabitant of this province.

Another aspect that needs to be explained concerns Cassian's Gothic origin, which certain scholars sustain.⁴² As already shown in the Introduction to this book, the ethnic origin of the inhabitants of Roman Scythia was diverse. At the beginning of the 1st century AD, the Roman poet Ovid (43 BC–17 AD), exiled in Tomi, mentioned the existence in the region, together with the old Greek colonists, of the Getae (considered the most numerous in the region), Sarmatians, Scythians (the old population of Iranian origin northwards of the Black Sea, that came to Dobruja), Bessi, Coralli, and (in the Peuce Island) Bastarnae.⁴³ Archaeological discoveries led to the conclusion that in the 1st–3rd centuries AD these populations went through an intense romanization process. It is considered that the Roman or romanized part represented

41 *Conlationes* XVII.30.2, p. 499⁵⁻¹⁷; trans., p. 1218.

42 See Eduard Schwartz, *Konzilstudien, I. Cassian und Nestorius, II. Über echte und unechte Schriften des Bischofs Proklos von Konstantinopel*, (Schriften der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft in Straßburg) 20 (Strasbourg: Trübner, 1914), p. 1. Based on the use of the term 'Scythian' with the meaning of 'Goth' in the 5th century, Owen Chadwick (*John Cassian*, p. 195) did not exclude the possibility that Gennadius may have had in mind a Gothic family settled on a Roman territory somewhere in the Balkans.

43 See Maria Munteanu, "Informațiile date de Ovidiu despre populația teritoriului rural al Dobrogei în comparație cu alte izvoare documentare" [The Information Given by Ovid on the Population of the Rural Territory of Dobruja in Comparison with Other Documentary Sources], *Pontica* 5 (1972), pp. 429–438.

at that time approximately 80 per cent of the rural population of the province (which was very numerous).⁴⁴ In what concerns the Goths, their number seems to have been quite small in Roman Scythia until 376. Bishop Ulfilas and the Christian Goths [*'Gothi minores'* ('Lesser Goths')] who had taken refuge to the Roman Empire during Aoric's persecution in 347–348, settled in Moesia Secunda, around Nicopolis ad Istrum (now Nikyup, Bulgaria), and not in Scythia.⁴⁵ At the same time, the refuge of some of the Christian Goths from the left side of the Danube on the territory of Scythia must be admitted, but it is unlikely for John Cassian's family to have been one of them. His parents' large properties mentioned by him plead in favour of a family having lived in Scythia for a long time. Moreover, the elegance of the Latin language that he spoke, which has been emphasized by scholars, reveals that it was his mother tongue, used within the family not only by him and his parents, but also by their forefathers.⁴⁶ It is, therefore, a family that lived for a long time in Roman Scythia and was fully integrated into the local Roman culture. Given the last-mentioned aspects, on the one hand, and the diverse origins of the local population of that time, on the other hand, we can acknowledge that the identification of the ethnical origin of his family is not possible. However, from all the possible origins that could be taken into account, the Gothic one seems to be the least probable. In these conditions, the most suitable interpretation of Gennadius' words "*Cassianus natione Scythia*" is: John Cassian from Roman Scythia.

John Cassian is supposed to have been born around the years 360/365, in a wealthy family (*Coll.* xxiv.1.3), which, although Christian (*Coll.* xxiv.1.2), gave him a very good classical education during childhood (*Coll.* xiv.12). It was also in his childhood that he had contact with monastic life, as Cassian himself mentions in his Preface to the *Institutes* (see below).

44 See Alexandru Barnea, "Aspects ethniques dans la vie rurale de la Dobroudja romaine (Mésie Inférieure)," in *La politique ediltaire dans les provinces de l'Empire romain II^{ème}–IV^{ème} siècles après J.-C.*, ed. Victor H. Baumann (Tulcea: Institutul de Cercetări Eco-Muzeale, 1998), pp. 213–228; Maria Bărbulescu and Livia Buzoianu, "Localités rurales de territoire de Tomis aux noms antiques inconnus: quelques observations sur l'onomastique," *Pontica* 48–49 (2015–2016), pp. 415–427; Maria Bărbulescu and Livia Buzoianu, "Observations sur la population dans la territoire de Tomis à l'époque romaine (1^{er}–III^e s. ap. J.-C.)," *Ancient West & East* 15 (2016), pp. 195–212.

45 Herwig Wolfram, *History of the Goths*, trans. Thomas J. Dunlap (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 63–64; Peter Heather and John Matthews, *The Goths in the Fourth Century*, 2nd ed., (Translated Texts for Historians) 11 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004), pp. 125 and 135.

46 Petschenig, "Prolegomena," p. 11.

As a young man (*Coll.* XIV.9.4), Cassian left his native places (c.378–380), heading toward Palestine, together with a friend and countryman named Germanus. Some scholars considered the possibility for Cassian's sister to have travelled with them to Palestine.⁴⁷ Most probably, the main motivation was their wish to visit the holy places. Cassian and Germanus had lived for a time at Bethlehem, in a monastery situated near the Cave of the Nativity of Jesus (*Inst.* III.4, IV.31; *Coll.* XVII.5.2). Afterward, attracted by the fame of the anchorites in Scetis desert, they left for Egypt. After the Origenist controversy had broken out there, Cassian and Germanus left for Constantinople (399/400), where they became the disciples of the Archbishop John Chrysostom (398–404, †407) (*De Incar.* VII.31.1, 4, 6). The latter ordained Cassian as a deacon and Germanus as a priest. After John Chrysostom's condemnation and removal from the seat (the Synod of the Oak, 403), Cassian and Germanus left for Rome (c.404/405) to defend the former archbishop's cause in front of Pope Innocent I (401–417).⁴⁸ Cassian became friends with archdeacon Leo [the future Pope Leo I (440–461)] and eventually went to Marseille (c.415/417), in Provence, where he lived until around 435. Germanus is supposed to have died in Rome before Cassian's departure.

In Marseille, John Cassian founded two abbeys (Saint Victor, for men, and Saint Sauveur, for women) and wrote three theological books: *The Twelve Books on the Institutes of the Coenobia*, and *the Remedies for the Eight Principal Faults* (*De institutis coenobiorum*), *The Conferences* (*Conlationes*), and *On the Incarnation of the Lord* (*De incarnatione Domini*). *Institutes* and *Conferences*, presenting various topics related to monastic life, were written at the request of Bishop Castor of Apta Julia (†c.420). The third one, against the teaching of Nestorius of Constantinople (428–431), was written at the request of archdeacon Leo.⁴⁹

47 Ioan G. Coman, *Scritori bisericești din epoca străromână* [Church Writers from the Proto-Romanian Era] (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1979), p. 221; Nicolae Chițescu, "Introducere generală" [General Introduction], in Sfântul Ioan Casian, *Scieri alese: Așezămintele mânăstirești, Convorbiri duhovnicești și Despre întruparea Domnului* [St. John Cassian, *Writings: Institutes, Conferences, and On the Incarnation of the Lord*], trans. Vasile Cojocaru and David Popescu, eds. Dumitru Soare et al., (Părinți și scriitori bisericești) 57 (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1990), p. 38; Popescu, "Frühes mönchtum," p. 226. Cassian's sister's departure on a pilgrimage to Palestine, together with him and Germanus, is credible.

48 Palladius, *Dialogus de vita sancti Johannis Chrysostomi* (*Dialogue sur la vie de Jean Chrysostome*) III, vol. 1, introd., critical text, trad., and notes Anne-Marie Malingrey, (Sources Chrétiennes) 341 (Paris: Cerf, 1988), pp. 76–77; *The Dialogue of Palladius concerning the Life of Chrysostom*, ed. Herbert-Moore, trans. W.K. Lowther Clarke, (Translations of Christian Literature. Series I, Greek texts) (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; New York: Macmillan, 1921), p. 25.

49 Gennadius, *De viris illustribus* LXII, p. 82.

In the *Conferences* and the *Institutes* there are several references, some of them direct, others allusive, to the situation of monasticism in his home province (Roman Scythia), during his stay there (c.360/365–378/380). The value of this information is given by the fact that it is provided by an eye-witness who later became a connoisseur of monastic life. It can be dated quite precisely (370s).

The starting point in the presentation of this news is the passage from the Preface to the *Institutes* mentioned above:

from our earliest youth (*a pueritia nostra*) we lived among them [i.e., monks] and were urged on by their daily exhortations and examples,— this we can scarcely retain in its entirety when we have been for so many years withdrawn from intercourse with them and from following their mode of life.⁵⁰

The term '*pueritia*,' used in the text, generated different interpretations. Some scholars considered that it referred to infancy in the faith or in monastic life, and not to physical age.⁵¹ A similar excerpt from the *Conferences* (xvii.7) was invoked to support the first interpretation: "Although we ought to be most grateful for the teaching of those men [the monks in Bethlehem] who taught us from our youth (*'a parvulis'*) up to attempt great things ..."⁵² In this last phrase, it is obvious that '*parvulus*' has the meaning of infancy in monastic life, referring to the period when Cassian and Germanus were in the monastery of Bethlehem. But even so, there is a possibility for the first paragraph to refer to physical age. Otherwise, there would be a pleonasm: ever since I started monastic life (since I entered the monastery), I have lived among monks. Therefore, the interpretation adopted for '*pueritia*' will be that of physical age in what follows.⁵³ In this case, the paragraph most probably refers to the situation found by Cassian in his native province.

50 *Instituta* praef.4, pp. 4²⁶–5⁶; trans., p. 401: "*a pueritia nostra inter eosdem constituti atque ipsorum incitati cotidianis adhortationibus et exemplis uel agere temptauimus uel didicimus uel uisu percepimus, minime iam possumus ad integrum retinere, tot annorum circulis ab eorum consortio et imitatione conuersationis abstracti, praesertim cum harum rerum ratio nequaquam possit otiosa meditatione doctrinaeque uerborum uel tradi uel intellegi uel memoria contineri.*"

51 Merkle, "Cassian kein Syrer," pp. 433–434; Chadwick, *John Cassian*, pp. 8–10 and 195; Cappuyns, "Cassien," col. 1322.

52 *Conlationes* xvii.7, p. 468^{23–25}; trans., p. 1187.

53 Sebastian Merkle ("Cassian kein Syrer," pp. 433–434) considered that such an interpretation (entering a monastery since childhood) is contradicted by several aspects: (i.) the classical education Cassian received, which he could not have achieved in a monastery; (ii.) the living memory of his parents, which involves more time spent with them;

First, the paragraph is particularly important because it confirms the existence of monks in Scythia, at that time. They are not ascetics living in the neighborhood of certain settlements, but monks living in a monastery. The use of the term '*consortio*' ('community') represents an indication that it was a coenobium; such an interpretation is sustained also by other references from Cassian's writings (see below).

The existence of a coenobium involves the respect of a rule, most probably based on the three fundamental monastic principles: chastity, poverty, and obedience. The term '*exemplum*' ('example') reveals the good deeds of those monks, in general, their asceticism and orthodoxy. That they may have been part of the Audians or any other schismatic or heretical group is excluded. Cassian's critical tone used when he referred to the anthropomorphic conception of God can be invoked to support this statement. It is in total disagreement with the appreciations expressed in the excerpt exposed above. In the first chapters of *Conference* x, which took place in the Scetis desert, with abba Isaac, Cassian energetically stood against anthropomorphism, preached also by the Audian monks. He named the teaching 'grievous error' ('*tam grauis error*') and 'heresy' ('*haeresis*'), considering that the anthropomorphic interpretation of the Holy Scriptures' words referring to God can lead to eternal death, making useless all personal ascetic efforts. At the end of his stand against this teaching, Cassian presented abba Isaac's opinion, stating that "one who has been taught the Catholic doctrine will abhor [the anthropomorphism] as heathenish blasphemy" ("*quam tamen ai quis fuerit catholicis dogmatibus institutus ut gentilem blasphemiam detestabitur*").⁵⁴

Therefore, it is least probable for John Cassian, a severe critic of anthropomorphism, but also of the Nestorianism, to have praised the way of living and, implicitly, the teaching of the Audians or of any other heretics. Consequently, the monks he praised and appreciated for their inspiring life and exemplary teaching must have been Catholic.

(iii.) the memory of walking through the forests of his native region, which would have been impossible if he had been received in a monastery. Nevertheless, Cassian's words ("we lived among them/monks") do not necessarily suppose entering a monastery, but rather a close contact with some of the monks living not far from his home. The picture of Dobruja Gorge, presented at the beginning of this subchapter, is compatible with such an interpretation: a *vicus*, a small village or *villa rustica* (with Christian inhabitants), and a cave near them, where could have lived a number of monks. Moreover, it is not excluded that these supposed monks may have participated in the week-end in Eucharistic ceremonies officiated in a village church. All these suppose the existence of close contacts between the monks and the inhabitants of the region.

54 *Conlationes* x.4.1-2 and 5.2-3, pp. 289¹⁸-290² and 291^{5, 9-11}; trans., pp. 1028-1029.

John Cassian's testimony on the existence in Roman Scythia of some well-established Catholic monasteries in 370s is in agreement with archaeological discoveries, as well. Not far from his native village, at Slava Rusă (Romania), the remains of a monastery from the second half of the 4th century were discovered. A rock-carved monastery from the same period was also identified in Dumbrăveni (Romania), in the southern part of the province (see Map 9). Finally, Casian Cave may have also been used by some monks at that time.⁵⁵

Another piece of information about monastic life in his home province is provided by John Cassian in the last *Conference* (xxiv), held with abba Abraham. It reveals the prevalence in Roman Scythia of the cenobitic organization form. It is there that John Cassian and Germanus state: "and this [the interruption of the continuous prayer by the brothers that visited them] we certainly feel would never happen in our own country, where it is impossible to find anyone, or scarcely anyone who adopts this manner of life [i.e., anchoritic life]."⁵⁶

Some scholars consider the passage as a testimony of the weak representation of monasticism in Cassian's native province.⁵⁷ Conversely, his confession in *Institutes* (praef.4), previously presented, states that he had lived since childhood ('*a pueritia*') among monks. Some scholars tried to make the two excerpts agree by interpreting *pueritia* as infancy in the faith, and not physical age.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, Maïeul Cappuyns, although interpreted this term in a similar way, considered that the passage from *Conference* xxiv.18 refers to the scarcity of anchorites in Cassian's native province and not to any form of monastic life.⁵⁹

The context of the statement in *Conference* xxiv.18 suggests, indeed, the interpretation proposed by Cappuyns. Abba Abraham, the one with whom Cassian had that discussion, was a famous anchorite, who lived in an almost uninhabitable area in northern Egypt, in the Scetis desert. At that time, Cassian and Germanus were engaged in the effort to acquire a reclusion life

55 See below, chapter 13: 'Monasteries on the territory between the Danube and the Black Sea during 4th–7th centuries AD.'

56 *Conlationes* xxiv.18, p. 695¹⁻³; trans., p. 1383: "*Quod sine dubio nullatenus in nostra prouincia credimus euenturum, in qua aut nullum aut certe rarissimum professionis huius uirum inuenire possibile est.*"

57 Columba Stewart, *Cassian the Monk*, (Oxford Studies in Historical Theology) (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 4; Antonie Plămădeală, "Sfântul Gherman din Dacia Pontică, un străromân ignorat" [Saint Germanus from Pontic Dacia, an Ignored Proto-Romanian], *Mitropolia Ardealului* 34 (1989), no. 5, p. 5; Coman, *Scritori bisericești*, p. 219.

58 Chadwick, *John Cassian*, pp. 8–10 and 195.

59 Cappuyns, "Cassien," col. 1321.

as pure as possible, wishing, as shown by the discussion with Abraham, to keep the peace of the meditation in solitude as much as possible. Still, their efforts were thwarted by their being visited by other anchorites: “sometimes we are beset by our brethren and cannot possibly continue in unbroken solitude and continual silence.”⁶⁰ They thought they would keep this “continual silence” (“*diuturno silentio*”) in their home province, where there were very few anchorites, if any. In this case, the text reveals the poor representation of the Egyptian type of anchoritic life in Scythia province in the 370s.⁶¹

The words “it is impossible to find anyone” (“*aut nullum*”) suggest that John Cassian and Germanus did not personally meet any anchorite in their native province. Nevertheless, by the words “or scarcely anyone” (“*aut certe rarissimum ... uirum*”), they did not totally exclude the possibility of such monks to exist in Scythia.

This interpretation of the assertion in *Conference* xxiv.18 finds support also in other excerpts from John Cassian’s works. The clearest of them closes the discussion held with abba Piamun, at Diolcos, in the north-eastern part of the Nile Delta, shortly after their coming to Egypt. In that paragraph, John Cassian revealed the desire that seized him after that dialogue:

By this discourse the blessed Piamun excited still more keenly our desire in which we had begun to be promoted from the infant school of the Coenobium to the second standard of the anchorites’ life. For it was under his instruction that we made our first start in solitary living, the knowledge of which we afterwards followed up more thoroughly in Scetis.⁶²

Cassian expressed himself in a similar way at the end of the discussion held with abba Paphnutius in Scetis desert:

when we fancied that by making perfect the first renunciation [i.e., the poverty] (which we were endeavouring to do with all our powers), we could climb the heights of perfection, we should make the discovery that we had not yet even begun to dream of the heights to which a monk can rise, since after we had learnt some few things [in coenobia] about the

60 *Conlationes* xxiv.18, p. 694²⁰⁻²²; trans., p. 1383: “*quod interdum a fratribus frequentati iugi secreto ac diuturno silentio secundum desiderium nostrum nequaquam possumus inhaerere.*”

61 Similarly, Radu Mișu, “Monahismul daco-roman” [Daco-Roman Monasticism], in *Monahismul ortodox românesc: istorie, contribuții și repertorizare*, 1, eds. Mircea Păcurariu and Nicolae Edroiu (Bucharest: Basilica, 2014), pp. 299–300.

62 *Conlationes* xviii.16.15, pp. 531²⁵–532³; trans., p. 1248.

second renunciation [i.e., the cure of the principal faults], we should find out that we had not before this even heard a word of the third stage [i.e., the divine contemplation], in which all perfection is comprised, and which in many ways far exceeds these lower ones.⁶³

These excerpts show that before their arrival in Egypt (in Scythia and in Palestine), Cassian and Germanus had not known about the anchorite life and its characteristics.

This aspect related to monastic life in Roman Scythia must not surprise anyone, if it is taken into account that the Egyptian type of anchorite life, with obvious hesychastic features, was poorly represented at that time in other provinces of the empire, as well.⁶⁴ Suggestive, in this respect, is the testimony of abba Piamun, who personally knew the realities of monastic life in Pontus and Armenia during the reign of Valens (364–378):

since in the time of Lucius [of Alexandria (363, 373–380)] who was a bishop of Arian misbelief in the reign of Valens, while we carried alms to our brethren; viz., those from Egypt and the Thebaid, who had been consigned to the mines of Pontus and Armenia for their steadfastness in the Catholic faith, though we found the system of Coenobia in some cities few and far between, yet we never made out that even the name of anchorites was heard among them.⁶⁵

This analysis leads to the conclusion that coenobitic monasticism prevailed in Roman Scythia in 370s. John Cassian's praising words about the monks he met prove that they were trying to respect the rule of monastic life. On the other hand, the anchoritic type of living was weakly represented in the province. Its existence must not be totally excluded, as John Cassian did not do that, either. Nevertheless, if it had some representatives, they were exceptions within the general framework of local monasticism. Theotimus I, later metropolitan of Tomi (see below), could be integrated in the category of these supposed local anchorites.

63 *Conlationes* III.22.4, p. 95^{4–11}; trans., p. 81. John Cassian presents contemplation as a characteristic of anchoritic life—see *Instituta* VIII.18, pp. 161²⁷–162³; trans., p. 603.

64 On the practice of contemplative prayer by Egyptian monks, see *Conlationes* X.10.1–15, pp. 297³–302²⁸; trans., pp. 1035–1038; Antoine Guillaumont, *Aux origines du monachisme chrétien: pour une phénoménologie du monachisme*, 2nd ed., (Spiritualité orientale) 30 (Paris: Cerf, 2019), pp. 127–134.

65 *Conlationes* XVIII.7.8, p. 516^{9–14}; trans., pp. 1231–1232.

In the second *Conference* held with abba Moses in Scetis, a monk (Benjamin) is mentioned, said to be a ‘fellow citizen’ (*‘ciuem uestrum’*) of Cassian and Germanus. He is, therefore, a Christian from Roman Scythia, as well. Benjamin is said to have been enslaved by gluttony and, not fighting with it according to the great ascetics’ teaching, he finally left the desert and went back to the world.⁶⁶

There is no indication as to the route Benjamin followed on his way to Egypt. Like Cassian and Germanus, he most probably had Palestine as a first destination, where he will have visited the places related to Jesus Christ’s earthly activities. It is also there that he may have come into contact with certain Egyptian monks or pilgrims, prayed at the holy places, or may have found out from the others’ confessions about the fame of the Egyptian monks. This may have stimulated Benjamin to go to Egypt, as well, where he (initially) decided to stay for the rest of his life. Another possibility would be for him to have left as a pilgrim to Mount Sinai after having visited the Holy Land, and then to have gone praying at the shrine of St. Menas in the Maryût, which had become an important pilgrimage centre in the Christian East.⁶⁷ However, as in the case of Cassian and Germanus, Benjamin’s retreat to the desert of Egypt may have been motivated also by the contact with some of the ascetics in the region. Moreover, the motivation of Cassian and Germanus’ departure from Palestine to Egypt (meeting abba Pinufius in Bethlehem)⁶⁸ shows that until then they had not been aware of the importance of Egyptian monasticism. This leads to the conclusion that the fame of the Egyptian monks was not spread or, at least, not understood at its true value in Roman Scythia of 370s. Nevertheless, even so, Benjamin’s case, which doubles that of Cassian and Germanus, demonstrates the increased number of Christians’ pilgrimages from Roman Scythia to Palestine and Egypt at that time, as well as the settlement there of some of them.

It is also worth mentioning that John Cassian characterized his native places as suitable for monastic and, especially, anchoritic life, due to the favorable conditions they offered. The value of his appreciations in this regard is all the greater as he knew very well monastic life and the conditions necessary for its development. These considerations, already repeatedly mentioned, he exposed in the last *Conference* (XXIV), held with abba Abraham.⁶⁹

66 *Conlationes* 11.24.1, p. 63¹; trans., p. 778.

67 Peter Grossmann, “The Pilgrimage Center of Abû Minâ,” in *Pilgrimage and Holy Space in Late Antique Egypt*, ed. David Frankfurter, (Religions in the Graeco-Roman World) 134 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2015), pp. 281–302.

68 *Instituta* IV.30–32, pp. 68–71; trans., pp. 490–493.

69 See above, p. 230, n. 11.

11.2 The Influence of John Cassian's Teachings on Scythian Monasticism in Late Antiquity

Another topic related to monastic life in Roman Scythia regards John Cassian's relation to his native province after he left it during adolescence. This issue is strongly related to the way in which John Cassian influenced, by his teaching, the evolution of Istro-Pontic monasticism.

If Dionysius Exiguus, another great monastic personality originating from Roman Scythia and settled in the West, is known to have maintained contact with his home country, the clarification of this aspect in the case of John Cassian is more difficult to establish.⁷⁰ The main obstacle is the lack of clear information, both in his work and in the external sources that mention him. Nevertheless, there are certain indirect indications that contribute to the understanding of this topic.

Some of these details can be found in the writings of Cassian himself. It is his own opinion on the monk's relation to his native places in general and with his family members in particular. At the beginning of the *Conference* held with abba Abraham in Scetis desert of Egypt, on mortification (renunciation), John Cassian mentioned the longing for their family and native places that often tormented him and his friend, Germanus.⁷¹ In the evolution of that *Conference* discourse, his confession became an opportunity to analyse the attitude that every monk must have in his relations with the outside world, that he had left when he entered the monastery. The main idea is that the real monk, as he was seen by the Egyptian type of monasticism, died completely to the world and that any opportunity to resume the old relations with the family, with any of the former acquaintances, and even with his native places must be eliminated. In this context, the laudatory example of a certain abba Apollonius is presented. He is being asked by his blood brother to help him in a personal issue, refused by telling him that he had died for a long time, when he had adopted monastic life and, therefore, there is no help one can get from a dead person.⁷² In *Institutes*, Cassian also mentioned the case of a monk originating from the province of Pontus who, in order not to lose the peace of mind

70 On Dionysius Exiguus, see below, subchapter 12.2: 'Dionysius Exiguus.'

71 *Conlationes* XXIV.1.2–3, pp. 674¹⁵–675⁸; trans., p. 1363.

72 *Conlationes* XXIV.9.1–3, pp. 683¹–684²; trans., p. 1372. Entering monastic life was considered akin to a death in the world and to the life led until that moment, with all its pleasures.

acquired in fifteen years of ascetic effort, burned all the letters received from his parents and old friends, without opening them.⁷³

These examples reveal Cassian's conviction that the peace of mind necessary to achieve complete concentration in the prayer, acquired with great effort, is a valuable gain that the monk must not waste for a 'senseless joy' (as was called by that monk of Pontus), by resuming the relations with the loved ones, with whom he had lived before entering the monastery. Moreover, within the same *Conference*, Cassian and Germanus admitted that the return to the home lands was not only deprived of any use for their spiritual progress, but would have rather been a serious obstacle.⁷⁴ Besides, Cassian does not mention anywhere that he disobeyed abba Abraham's advice to avoid all contact with those from his homeland.

The conclusion that can be drawn is that this principle (avoiding relations with the native places) guided all the life of the two monks (Cassian and Germanus). This may have been the reason why Cassian carefully avoided giving clear and detailed information about his native region and those living there. This detail was least important and, besides, a real threat for his peace of mind. Moreover, in his writings, he often urges his readers to put out of their mind all troubling thoughts that could be obstacles in the way of pure prayer. In his opinion, once such a thought settled into the human mind, fighting it becomes much more difficult, and there is a high risk of falling into sin.

All these are arguments in favour of the supposition that John Cassian interrupted all relations with his native province after departing from there. Even the "innocent" correspondence that, as already shown, he considered as dangerous for the peace of mind as the visit of relatives and old acquaintances, must be excluded.

The only possible relation of John Cassian and Germanus with their province after leaving it could have taken place in Constantinople. As already explained, the two were both disciples of John Chrysostom, who, in his turn, was in close contact with Metropolitan Theotimus I of Tomi. The latter is twice attested in Constantinople and was one of the supporters of John Chrysostom. Under these circumstances, John Cassian and Germanus may have met the bishop of Scythia in the entourage of John Chrysostom.⁷⁵ It is difficult to say how frequent these possible encounters might have been and what discussions

73 *Instituta* v.32, pp. 105²¹–106¹⁸; trans., p. 539. The protagonist of this episode is supposed to have been Evagrius Ponticus—see Chițescu, "Introducere generală," p. 181, n. 177.

74 *Conlationes* xxiv.10–14, pp. 684¹¹–690²⁰; trans., pp. 1373–1378.

75 Similarly, Emilian Popescu, "Sfântul Ioan Casian, părinte al monahismului românesc și teolog al asceticii patristice" [Saint John Cassian, a Father of Romanian Monasticism and a Theologian of Patristic Asceticism], in *Fiu al României și Părinte al Bisericii Universale*.

were held among the participants. It is less probable, however, that they may have treated aspects related to this world, as Theotimus himself was a monk preoccupied with not losing his peace of mind (see below).

As to the influence of Cassian's teachings on monastic life in his native province, it is excluded by the dates of the available sources. In the 6th century, several monks known in historiography under the name of 'Scythian monks' originated from Roman Scythia. Their contribution to the clarification of the Christological teaching regarding the hypostatic union is fully recognized at present. Nevertheless, in the centre of their soteriological teaching was the doctrine on predestination, conceived by Augustine of Hippo.⁷⁶ Through this, Scythian monks were on a theological position different from that sustained by John Cassian. In his *Conference* (XIII) with abba Charemon on the divine grace and human free will, Cassian named the teaching on predestination a grievous blasphemy.⁷⁷ Moreover, during their activity, Scythian monks publicly condemned the soteriological teaching of Faustus of Riez (†c.490–495), the former abbot of the monastery of Lérins, who had fought against the predestination doctrine in his treatise on grace (*De Gratia*). Through this attitude, they were situated in a position opposed to the one sustained by John Cassian. That they had never mentioned his name and made no reference to his writings is also important. This shows that the monks in Roman Scythia did not know the theological writings of John Cassian at the beginning of the 6th century.

Based on the information presented above, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. John Casian and Germanus avoided relations with their native province (Roman Scythia) after leaving it and being initiated into monastic living in Egypt;
2. John Cassian's writings were not known in Roman Scythia in the first half of the 6th century. Therefore, his theological teaching and the monastic principles exposed in them did not influence the evolution of monasticism there during Late Antiquity.⁷⁸

Sfântul Ioan Casian. Viața și învățătura lui, ed. Mihai Iordăchescu, (Teologie și spiritualitate) 15 (Iași: Trinitas, 2002), p. 15.

76 On the Scythian monks and their teaching, see below, subchapter 12.3: 'The Scythian monks.'

77 *Conlationes* XIII.7.2, p. 369¹³⁻¹⁶; trans., p. 1076: "For if He [i.e., God] willeth not that one of His little ones should perish, how can we imagine without grievous blasphemy (*ingenti sacrilegio*) that He does not generally will all men, but only some instead of all to be saved?"

78 Georgi Atanasov and Mircea Ielciu have a different opinion. Atanasov ["Les monastères rupestres le long de la rivière Suha, dans la région de Dobrudja de Sud," *Byzantinoslavica* 69 (2011), p. 207] alleges that John Cassian had Dionysius Exiguus as his disciple, and Ielciu

11.3 Saint Vetranio of Tomi (c.367–c.374)

During John Cassian's childhood, the Church in Roman Scythia was ruled by Vetranio/Bretanio of Tomi. This hierarch is known to have been one of the firmest defenders of the Nicene doctrine at the time. Presenting the regions of the empire where the Catholic faith was kept during the Arian persecution, Sozomen stated that where the hierarchs opposed Arianism, the Christians remained faithful to the Nicene doctrine. To strengthen this statement, he presented the case of Bishop Vetranio, who stood against the Semi-Arian Emperor Valens. The event took place in 369, in the context of the war started by the emperor against the Goths on the left side of the Danube. Being in Roman Scythia, Valens visited the metropolis of Tomi and, entering the basilica where Vetranio was performing the religious service, tried to draw him to Arianism. The reaction of the bishop was firm: he exposed in front of everybody (emperor, his companions, and the inhabitants of the metropolis) the doctrine of faith established at the First Council of Nicaea and then he left (followed by all the faithful) to another basilica in the city, leaving the emperor with those who accompanied him. For this offense, Valens exiled Vetranio. But, not long after, the emperor recalled him because he apprehended a supposed insurrection of the inhabitants of Scythia, who were dissatisfied with their bishop's exile.⁷⁹

After describing the event, Sozomen made a brief characterization of Vetranio, stating that “the Scythians [i.e., the inhabitants of the Roman Scythia] themselves testify that he [i.e., Vetranio] was good in all other respects and eminent for the virtue of his life.”⁸⁰ Based on these words, certain scholars supposed that Vetranio was a monk.⁸¹

Nevertheless, these laudatory words do not constitute an absolute proof in this respect. They prove Vetranio's virtuous life, but any Christian sincerely preoccupied with the respect of the evangelical teachings could lead such a life. A proof in this regard is the case of the presbyter Montanus of Singidunum,

[“Teologi din Scythia Minor. Personalități teologice reprezentative” (Theologians from Scythia Minor. Representative Theological Personalities), in *Monahismul ortodox românesc*, 1, p. 335] that Cassian maintained contact with his homeland, like Dionysius Exiguus, either through the circulation of his writings in all the empire, or via correspondence or the people travelling between Provence and Roman Scythia.

79 Sozomenos, *Historia ecclesiastica* VI.21.2–6, in *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Christian Hansen Günther, (Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller) 4 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995), pp. 263¹⁶–264⁶; trans. Chester D. Hartranft, (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers) 11/2 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 799.

80 Sozomenos, *Historia ecclesiastica* VI.21.6, p. 264^{7–8}; trans., p. 800: “ἀνὴρ τὰ τε ἄλλα ἀγαθὸς καὶ ἐπὶ βίου ἀρετῇ ἐπίσημος, ὡς καὶ αὐτοὶ Σκύθαι μαρτυροῦσιν.”

81 Mișu, “Monahismul daco-roman,” p. 296.

who suffered martyrdom at Sirmium together with his wife, Maxima.⁸² Their martyrdom constitute the clearest proof of the virtuous life that these married Christians could lead.

It is to be noted that Sozomen wanted to particularly specify that Theotimus I of Tomi belonged to the monastic movement (see below), but he mentioned nothing similar about Vetranio. Therefore, based only on Sozomen's rather general characterization, the inclusion of this Tomitan hierarch in the category of bishops who came from among the ranks of monks must be considered with caution.

Due to his name [Vetranio, considered a form of Ουετερανίων, from the Latin word 'veteranus' ('veteran')], it was supposed that he had been part of the Roman armed forces in Scythia, and that, after retiring from the army, became bishop of Tomi.⁸³ This is a simple hypothesis, which does not contribute to the understanding of Vetranio's status within the Church in the period preceding his election as a hierarch. Nevertheless, his election to the episcopal see of Tomi and the fact that he stood against Valens confirm his good theological formation, his inflexible character, and the fame he had in the province at that time. His virtuous life, as well as the hypothesis that he was a veteran of the Roman army, give way to the possibility that he may have been unmarried, but not necessarily a monk.⁸⁴

The period when Vetranio was a bishop is important for the present topic also from another point of view. The church relations between Scythia and Cappadocia, whose bishop was Basil the Great, were particularly intense at that time.⁸⁵ They were due to the transfer of the relics of Saint Sabas, who

82 *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, in *Acta Sanctorum Novembris*, 2/1, eds. Giovanni Battista De Rossi and Louis Duchesne (Bruxelles: Société Belge de Librairie, 1894), p. 36: "in sirmi montani prb et maximae uxoris eius" ("in Sirmium [the martyrdom] of presbyter Montanus and his wife Maxima").

83 Vasile Muntean, "Creștinismul nostru vechi. Sinodul I Ecumenic et alia" [Our Old Christianity. The First Council of Nicaea et alia], *Analele Universității de Vest din Timișoara—Seria Teologie* 23 (2017), p. 118.

84 At the beginning of the 5th century, Palladius of Galatia (*Dialogus* xv, p. 296⁴⁶⁻⁴⁸; trans., p. 129) presents the unmarried bishops in a better light than those who were married. Still, he does not specify that the unmarried hierarchs were monks: "καὶ εἰς τοὺς τόπους αὐτῶν ἕτεροι ἀείπαιδες ἀντεισηχθησαν, βίῳ καὶ λόγῳ κεκοσμημένοι" ("In their places [i.e., the corrupt bishops in Asia] six others [bishops] were instituted, unmarried men, adorned by graces both of life and speech.")

85 The relations between Scythia and Cappadocia were old, being mediated by the Cappadocian missionaries that arrived to the Lower Danube region. In the (unpreserved) letter addressed to Basil the Great, Vetranio referred (as shown by Basil's response) to a Cappadocian named Euty chius, who had preached the Christian faith in trans-Danubian Gothia. He was considered one of those who had spread the seed of the Gospel in the

suffered martyrdom in trans-Danubian Gothia (12 April 372), to Caesarea. These relations raise the question of the knowledge and implementation in Scythia of the Basilian monastic rule and of the Cappadocian social assistance system. The understanding of this aspect could be achieved based on the information regarding the main protagonists involved in the transfer of the relics: Vetrano and Junius Soranus (the military commander of Scythia).

Vetrano is the addressee of Basil the Great's letter no. 165, sent in 374.⁸⁶ Its content shows that he was a Cappadocian,⁸⁷ but that he had not personally known Basil, nor corresponded with him until then.⁸⁸ The information

region from which Sabas had come—see Basil of Caesarea, *Letters* 164.2, vol. 2, trans. Roy J. Deferrari, (Loeb Classical Library) 215 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1926), pp. 424–425.

- 86 The extant manuscripts show Ascholi of Thessalonica as the addressee of Letter 165. However, the majority of scholars consider that the real addressee is Vetrano of Tomi—see Georg Pfeilschifter, “Kein neues Werk des Wulfila,” in *Festgabe Alois Knöpfler zur Vollendung des 60. Lebensjahres gewidmet*, eds. A. Biglmair et al., (Veröffentlichungen aus dem Kirchenhistorischen Seminar München) 3/1 (Munich: Lentner, 1907), p. 223; Joseph Mansion, “Les origines du christianisme chez les Gots,” *Analecta Bollandiana* 33 (1914), p. 13; Jacques Zeiller, *Les origines chrétiennes dans les provinces danubiennes de l'empire romain* (Paris: De Boccard, 1918), p. 431; Henri Leclercq, “Goths,” in *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie chrétienne et de Liturgie*, VI/2, eds. Fernand Cabrol and Henri Leclercq (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1925), col. 1439–1440; Ștefan C. Alexe, “1600 de ani de la moartea Sfântului Sava Gotul” [1600 Years since the Death of Saint Sabas the Goth], *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 90 (1972), nos. 5–6, pp. 562–563; Teodor Bodogae, “Studiu introductiv, comentarii și indici” [Introductory Study, Commentaries, and Index], in Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, *Scrisori* [Basil the Great, *Letters*], (Părinți și scriitori bisericești) 12 (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1988), p. 357, n. 1; Emilian Popescu, “Qui est l'auteur de l'Acte du martyre de Saint Sabas « Le Goth »?” in *Études byzantines et post-byzantines*, 4, eds. Emilian Popescu and Tudor Teoteoi (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 2001), p. 15; Mario Girardi, *Saba il Goto—martire di frontiera: testo, traduzione e commento del dossier greco* (Iași: Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza,” 2009), p. 47; Robert Born, *Die Christianisierung der Städte der Provinz Scythia Minor ein Beitrag zum spätantiken Urbanismus auf dem Balkan*, (Spätantike—Frühes Christentum—Byzanz. Reihe B, Studien und Perspektiven) 36 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2012), p. 28; Hippolyte Delehaye, “Saints de Thrace et de Mésie,” *Analecta Bollandiana* 31 (1912), pp. 288–289 (with caution); Heather and Matthews, *The Goths*, pp. 112–113 (questionable).
- 87 Basil of Caesarea, *Letters* 165, pp. 428–431: “... the noble qualities in you [i.e., Vetrano] are a source of pride to our own country [i.e., Cappadocia]. For like a vigorous branch sprung from a noble root you have filled with spiritual fruits the country [i.e., Roman Scythia] beyond our own borders. Rightly, therefore, does our country glory in its own offshoot. ... With a martyr [i.e., Sabas], who but lately finished his struggle in the barbarian land neighbouring your own, you have honoured the land [i.e., Cappadocia] which bore you, ...”
- 88 See Basil of Caesarea, *Letters* 165, pp. 428–429.

provided by Sozomen leads to the conclusion that Vetranio was no longer in Cappadocia when Basil was implementing his monastic rule and organizing the charitable institution of Caesarea (the Basiliad). Given how appreciated Vetranio in Tomi was in 369,⁸⁹ he must have been elected bishop at least 2–3 years earlier (c.366–367) and settled in the province at least some other 2–3 years before that (c.363–364). In this case, he was already in Scythia when Basil became a priest in Caesarea (c.364) and could not witness the implementation of his projects there.⁹⁰ Vetranio could have found out about these either through correspondence (about which there is no information, though) carried with his relatives that remained in Cappadocia, or from the people travelling between the two provinces (Scythia and Cappadocia), or (possibly) even from some of the members of his clergy, who could have accompanied the relics of Saint Sabas when they were transferred to Caesarea. The last-mentioned hypothesis is based on the information regarding this event. As shown by the *Passion* of Saint Sabas, Junius Soranus organized the transfer of his relics from trans-Danubian Gothia to Scythia.⁹¹ From that moment onward, the members of the church clergy in the province were also directly involved in the organization of the transfer, under Vetranio's direct coordination: it was in their milieu that the *Passion* of the martyr was written, and the presbyterium of Scythia was the one who approved the transfer of the relics to Cappadocia.⁹² The solemnity of this transfer⁹³ gives way to the possibility that the relics may have been escorted also by certain members of the Tomitan clergy, not only by the soldiers of Junius Soranus. The documents do not mention anything about such escort. Basil does not say a word about it in his letters (nos. 164 and 165), whereas in the *Passion* of Sabas it is specified that the one who organized their transfer to Cappadocia was Junius Soranus.⁹⁴ Nevertheless, this silence does not exclude the possibility for some of the clerics in Scythia to have gone to Caesarea on this special occasion. In such a case, those clerics could get to know the Basiliad and some of the monasteries neighbouring the city.

89 Sozomenos, *Historia ecclesiastica* vi.21.4, p. 263²⁷; trans., p. 799: “καὶ ὁ λαὸς ἐπηκολούθησε.” (“he [i.e., Vetranio] was followed by the people [in Tomi]” after having confronted Valens).

90 Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, 3 (Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, 1986), p. 205.

91 *Passio S. Sabae Gothi* 8, in Delehaye, “Saints de Thrace,” p. 221^{15–18}; trans. Heather and Matthews, *The Goths*, pp. 109–110.

92 *Passio S. Sabae Gothi* 8, p. 221¹⁸; trans., p. 110: “διὰ θελήματος τοῦ πρεσβυτέρου.” On the scholarly opinions on the Church to which this presbyterium belonged (the Church of Scythia or that of Gothia), see above, subchapter 2.3.3: ‘The evolution of the ecclesiastical province of Scythia after 381’, p. 73, n. 200.

93 See Girardi, *Saba il Goto*, pp. 33–34.

94 *Passio S. Sabae Gothi* 8, p. 221^{15–18}; trans., pp. 109–110.

Junius Soranus could have also provided to Vetranio data about Basil's achievements. He is the addressee of another letter (no. 155) of the hierarch of Caesarea, sent in 373.⁹⁵ Its content shows that Soranus was also from Cappadocia, that he was a faithful Catholic (like Vetranio and Basil), that he participated regularly in church services, that he was close to Basil (possibly a relative), and that he had been to Scythia for a short time.⁹⁶ In the *Passion* of Saint Sabas it is specified that he had the function of military commander (*dux*) of the province.⁹⁷ Of utmost interest is the fact that Soranus was involved at that time in helping the Christian Goths that had taken refuge in Scythia due to Athanaric's persecution.⁹⁸ That Soranus wanted to inform Basil on this charitable activity in the letter previously addressed to him shows that he admired the similar initiatives of the hierarch of Caesarea and that he had been inspired by his charitable actions. These activities carried out by Soranus in Scythia could lead to Vetranio's being informed about Basil's achievements (including those related to the reorganization of monastic life, which went together with charitable activities) and to the involvement in these actions both of the hierarch of Tomi (if he had not been involved, already) and of the monks in the province. This hypothetical collaboration of the two Cappadocians (Soranus and Vetranio) finds support also in the fact that they were both Catholic and coordinated their actions on the occasion of the transfer of Saint Sabas' relics. On the other hand, it is not excluded that Junius Soranus may have entered conversation with the hierarch of Tomi from the moment of his arrival in Scythia, informing him about the defence of the Nicene doctrine by Basil the Great, as well as about his other initiatives related to the life of the Church in Caesarea.

Within the frame of this hypothetical picture, the possibility for the Basilian monastic rule to have been known in Scythia at the time of Vetranio is very high. It is difficult to say if they were also implemented in the province at the same time. Given the active spirit of this hierarch in defending the Nicene doctrine, the information on Basil's reforms in Cappadocia certainly stimulated

95 Pfeilschifter, *Kein neues*, pp. 195 and 209; Delehay, "Saints de Thrace," p. 288; Mansion, "Les origines," p. 12; Zeiller, *Les origines*, p. 431; Leclercq, "Goths," col. 1439; Alexe, "1600 de ani," p. 561; Bodogae, "Studiu introductiv," pp. 341–342, n. 1; Popescu, "Qui est l'auteur," p. 11; Heather and Matthews, *The Goths*, p. 110; Girardi, *Saba il Goto*, p. 25.

96 Basil of Caesarea, *Letters* 155, pp. 380–383.

97 *Passio S. Sabae Gothi* 8, p. 221^{13–14}; trans., p. 109.

98 Basil of Caesarea, *Letters* 155, pp. 384–385: "and whatever alleviation you [i.e., Soranus] render to those who are being persecuted for the sake of the name of the Lord, this you are preparing for yourself on the day of reward."

his (re)organization of the monasteries and of the charitable institutions (whatever they may have been) in Scythia.

11.4 Saint Theotimus I of Tomi (c.390–c.407)

By the turn of the 5th century, the see of Tomi had Theotimus I as bishop. He led the Church of Scythia in a period full of troubles, generated by the robberies of the Huns settled in the Lower Danube territories. Important for the present analysis is the relation of this hierarch with monastic life in the province.

There is much information on Theotimus provided by Sozomen, Socrates Scholasticus, Palladius of Galatia, Jerome of Stridon, and John of Damascus. His name was also mentioned within one of the sessions of the Council of Chalcedon (451) by a Constantinopolitan archimandrite named Carosus.

Sozomen presents Theotimus as being ‘a Scythian’ (‘Σκύθης’), which scholars have interpreted in different ways. Some of them considered him a Goth, others a Greek (as he knew very well the Greek language) or one of the local people (Daco-Roman, Geto-Dacian, or Geto-Daco-Roman) of Roman Scythia.⁹⁹ Finally, others have pointed out that the term ‘Scythian’ used by

99 A Goth: Georg Waitz, *Über das Leben und die Lehre des Ulfila Bruchstücke eines ungedruckten Werkes aus dem Ende des 4. Jahrhunderts* (Hanover: Hahn, 1840), p. 56; Haralambie Mihăescu and R. Lăzărescu, “Indice” [Index], in *Fontes Historiae Dacoromanae*, 2, eds. Haralambie Mihăescu et al. (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1970), p. 761; Ene Braniște, “Martiri și Sfinți pe pământul Dobrogei de azi” [Martyrs and Saints on the Land of Now Dobruja], in *De la Dunăre la Mare. Mărturii istorice și monumente de artă creștină*, eds. Antim Nica et al. (Galați: Editura Arhiepiscopiei Tomisului și Dunării de Jos, 1979), p. 51. A Greek: Gheorghe I. Moiescu, Ștefan Lupșa, and Alexandru Filipașcu, *Istoria Bisericii Române* [The History of the Romanian Church], 1 (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1957), p. 81; Gheorghe I. Moiescu, “Sfinții Trei Ierarhi în Biserica Românească” [The Three Holy Hierarchs in Romanian Church], *Ortodoxia* 12 (1960), no. 1, p. 11, n. 29; Ilie I. Georgescu, “Viața creștină în vechiul Tomis” [Christian Life in Ancient Tomi], *Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei* 38 (1962), nos. 1–2, p. 25. A Daco-Roman: Coman, *Scritori bisericești*, pp. 185–186; Niculae Șerbănescu, “1600 de ani de la prima mărturie documentară despre existența Episcopiei Tomisului” [1600 Years since the First Documentary Attestation of the Bishopric of Tomi], *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 87 (1969), nos. 9–10, p. 1008; Ioan Rămureanu, “Sfinți și martiri la Tomis” [Saints and Martyrs in Tomi], *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 92 (1974), nos. 7–8, p. 1007; Ioan Rămureanu, *Actele Martirice* [The Acts of the Martyrs], (Părinți și scriitori bisericești) 11 (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1982), pp. 338–339 and 345; Braniște, “Martiri și Sfinți,” p. 51; Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române* [The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church], 1 (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1991), p. 145; Nestor Vornicescu, *Primele scrieri patristice în literatura română: secolele IV–XVI* [The First Patristic Writings in Romanian Literature: 4th–16th Centuries] (Craiova: Editura Mitropoliei Olteniei, 1984), p. 43; Ioan Vicovan, “Străromânul Teotim de Tomis, teolog

Sozomen did not indicate Theotimus' ethnical origin, but rather that he was from Roman Scythia.¹⁰⁰ The analysis of Sozomen's terminology confirms this last-mentioned interpretation. In his *Church History*, Sozomen used the term 'Scythian' only for those living in Roman Scythia (not also for their ethnical origin). In the paragraph dedicated to Theotimus, he also used it when referring to the sufferings provoked by the Huns to the inhabitants of the province.¹⁰¹ The term appears three more times in the paragraph dedicated to Vetrano.¹⁰² It is also used when the existence of only one bishop is mentioned in Roman Scythia.¹⁰³ In two places, Sozomen characterizes the inhabitants of Scythia (the Scythians) as 'ἔθνος' ('nation,' the equivalent of the Latin word '*natio*' or '*gens*').¹⁰⁴ In the case of the Goths, he used other terms: 'barbarians' ('βάρβαροι') and 'Goths' ('Γότθοι').¹⁰⁵ On the other hand, it is less probable that Theotimus might have come from any of the barbarian families newly settled in the province. In his book, Sozomen is quite explicit in this respect, as well. In four places, referring to certain people or groups of barbarian origin living on the territory of the empire, he mentioned their origin using the words "a barbarian by birth" ("βάρβαρος τὸ γένος").¹⁰⁶ Such a mention does not appear in the case of Theotimus, whose memory was still alive during the writing of *Church*

și sfânt al Bisericii nedespărțite, model de cooperare pentru Biserica noastră azi" [The Proto-Romanian Theotimus of Tomi, Theologian and Saint of the Undivided Church, a Model of Cooperation for Our Contemporary Church], *Analele Științifice ale Universității "Al. I. Cuza" din Iași—Teologie Ortodoxă* 9 (2004), p. 347; Nicolae Dură, „Scythia Minor” (Dobrogea) și Biserica ei apostolică. Scaunul arhiepiscopal și mitropolitan al Tomisului (sec. IV–XIV) [“Scythia Minor” (Dobruja) and Its Apostolic Church. The Archiepiscopal and Metropolitan See of Tomis (4th–14th Centuries)] (Bucharest: Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, 2006), pp. 36 and 39.

- 100 Emilian Popescu, “Sfântul Teotim, episcopul Tomisului” [Saint Theotimus, Bishop of Tomi], in *Sfinți români și apărători ai legii strămoșești*, ed. Nestor Vornicescu (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1987), p. 166; Nelu Zugravu, *Geneza creștinismului popular al românilor* [The Genesis of Romanian Folk Christianity], (Bibliotheca Thracologica) 18 (Bucharest: Institutul Român de Tracologie, 1997), p. 241.
- 101 Sozomenos, *Historia ecclesiastica* 7.26.8, p. 342³.
- 102 Sozomenos, *Historia ecclesiastica* 6.21.3, 6, 7, pp. 263¹⁷ and 264^{3, 8}.
- 103 Sozomenos, *Historia ecclesiastica* 7.19.2, p. 330¹².
- 104 Sozomenos, *Historia ecclesiastica* 6.21.3, p. 263^{18, 22}.
- 105 On 'barbarian,' see for example Sozomenos, *Historia ecclesiastica* 6.37.11, p. 296^{13–14}; trans, p. 834: “καθότι μὲν οὖν ὡς ἐπίπαν οἱ παρὰ τὸν Ἰστρον βάρβαροι τὰ Ἀρείου φρονουσί, πρόφασις ἦδε.” (“It was on this account, that the barbarians on the banks of the Ister followed the tenets of Arius.”). On 'Goth,' see for example Sozomenos, *Historia ecclesiastica* 4.24.1, p. 178¹¹; trans, p. 711: “... καὶ Οὐλφίλας ὁ τῶν Γότθων.” [“... and Ulfilas, (bishop) of the Goths”].
- 106 Sozomenos, *Historia ecclesiastica* 8.4.19, p. 356^{23–24}; trans., 900: “Φραβίτας, ἀνὴρ βάρβαρος τὸ γένος, ἀγαθὸς δὲ τὸν τρόπον καὶ στρατηγικός.” (“Flavita, a barbarian by birth, but a good man and an able general.”); similarly: 8.24.8–9, p. 382²⁴; 9.6.3, pp. 397^{27–398}; 9.9.3, p. 401¹⁵.

History (439–450), and when some of the former disciples of the metropolitan of Tomi were still living (see below). Had the Tomitan hierarch come from any of the barbarian-origin families newly settled in the province, the church historian would have been expected to mention this detail.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, Theotimus must be considered an inhabitant of Roman Scythia, born in a family that had been living in the province for at least two generations. The identification of the ethnical origin of his family is impossible, however, as Scythia was a province whose inhabitants had various origins and who had been subjected to an intense Romanization process, as already demonstrated.

The year of Theotimus' birth can be roughly established based on one of the information provided by Palladius. Speaking about the Home Synod of 400, he described Theotimus and other two hierarchs (Ammon of Thrace and Arabianus of Galatia) present at the synod, as "metropolitans advanced in years" ("πάντων μητροπολιτῶν γεγηρακότεων").¹⁰⁸ Based on this testimony, Theotimus' age at that time could have been in the range of 60–65 years and his birth placed around 335–340. In this case, he was older than John Chrysostom (born c.347) by approximately 10 years, and about 25 years older than John Cassian.

Sozomen specifies that Theotimus "had been brought up in the practice of philosophy" ("ἀνήρ ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ διατραφεὶς").¹⁰⁹ "Philosophy" there means "ascetic/monastic life." The term is used with this meaning in the Christian authors' writings even from the first half of the 4th century, starting with Eusebius of Caesarea.¹¹⁰ Sozomen himself used this term repeatedly with this meaning in his book, when referring to monastic life and its most remarkable representatives.¹¹¹ The church historian used it also with the meaning of pagan

107 Raymund Netzhammer [*Die christlichen Altertümer der Dobrudscha* (Bucharest: SOCEC & Co., 1918), p. 40] considered that Theotimus was of barbarian origin. He based his statement on the words of Nicephorus Callistus Xanthopoulos of Constantinople (c.1256–c.1335) (*Historia ecclesiastica* XII.45, PG 146:908), according to whom Theotimus was "a Scythian and a barbarian" ("Θεότιμος ἐκεῖνος, Σκύθης μὲν καὶ βάρβαρος ἄνθρωπος"). Nevertheless, Nikephoros took the information on Theotimus from Sozomen's book, his words being an erroneous interpretation of the term 'Σκύθης' ('a Scythian') from the church historian's text.

108 Palladius, *Dialogus* XIII, p. 274^{152–155}; trans., p. 117.

109 Sozomenos, *Historia ecclesiastica* VII.26.6, p. 342²²; trans., p. 885.

110 Gustave Bardy, "« Philosophie » et « philosophe » dans le vocabulaire chrétien des premiers siècles," *Revue d'ascétique et de mystique* 25 (1949), pp. 97–108. Gaspar Ladocsi ["Théotime," in *Dictionnaire Encyclopédique du Christianisme Ancien*, 2, eds. Angelo Di Berardino and François Vial (Paris: Cerf, 1990), p. 243] considers that Theotimus was a pagan philosopher before his conversion to Christianity. Sozomen's language excludes such an interpretation, however (see also next two notes).

111 See for example Sozomenos, *Historia ecclesiastica* 3.14.7, p. 119^{8–9}; trans., p. 648: "λόγος δὲ καὶ τὰ ἄλλα ἐνδύματα τῶν ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ μοναχῶν συλλαμβάνεσθαι εἰς ὑπόδειγμα φιλοσοφίας

philosophy. Nevertheless, to eliminate any confusion, in most of the cases he provided enough details for the two types of philosophy (Christian and pagan) to be properly identified by his readers.¹¹² In the case of Theotimus, the interpretation of ‘philosophy’ as ‘ascetic life’ is supported also by the description of his appearance and way of living, specific to the monks of the time:

It is said that Theotimus always retained the long hair which he wore when he first devoted himself to the practice of philosophy. He was very temperate, had no stated hours for his repasts, but ate and drank when compelled to do so by the calls of hunger and of thirst. I consider it to be the part of a philosopher to yield to the demands of these appetites from necessity, and not from the love of sensual gratification.¹¹³

It is difficult to establish the age when Theotimus started leading a philosophical life. The verb ‘διατρέφω’ is no longer used by Sozomen in any other place in his book. Nevertheless, it suggests that Theotimus had followed such a living for a long time.¹¹⁴ The moment when he started following an ascetic type of living could have been when he was 20 years old or even 30, at most. This means the years 355–360 or 365–370, before or during the time when Vetrano was leading the Church of the province. Sozomen does not specify the place where Theotimus embraced this style of living, either (in Roman Scythia or outside it). His local origin, as well as his later election to the metropolitan see of Tomi plead in favour of the first hypothesis (Scythia).

The church historian does not mention also if Theotimus entered a monastery when he became a follower of monastic philosophy or observed the principles of ascetic life on his own. The excerpt where Sozomen referred to the situation of monastic life in Thrace, where he points to the absence there of the tradition of the coenobitic monasticism, supports the second possibility

τινός, ...” (“It is said that the peculiar vestments of these Egyptian monks had reference to some secret connected with their philosophy, ...”).

112 See for example Sozomenos, *Historia ecclesiastica* 6.35.2, p. 291^{25–26}; trans., p. 829: “τινές γάρ, οἱ τῶν ἄλλων ἐν φιλοσοφίᾳ προφέρειν ἐνομίζοντο, πρὸς τὴν ἐπίδοσιν τοῦ Χριστιανισμοῦ δυσφοροῦντες, ...” [“Some among them (i.e., pagan philosophers), who were reputed to excel in philosophy, and who viewed with extreme displeasure the progress of the Christian religion, ...”].

113 Sozomenos, *Historia ecclesiastica* VII.26.9, p. 342^{11–14}; trans., p. 886: “φασὶ δὲ κομήτην αὐτὸν διαμεῖναι καθ’ ὃ σχῆμα φιλοσοφῆν ἀρξάμενος ἐπετήδευσε, λιπὸν δὲ τὴν δίαιταν, τροφῆς δὲ οὐ τὸν αὐτὸν, ἀλλ’ ἐν τῷ πεινήνῃ ἢ διψῆν τὸν καιρὸν ὀρίσαι· φιλοσόφου γὰρ ἦν, οἶμαι, καὶ τούτοις πρὸς χρείαν, οὐ διὰ ῥαστάωνην εἶκειν.”

114 Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p. 416: “διατρέφω—Pass, to be sustained continually; to be maintained.”

(outside a monastery).¹¹⁵ However, the possibility that he lived in a coenobium or a laura should not be excluded either, since archaeological discoveries have revealed their existence in Scythia at that time.¹¹⁶ Besides, the election of Theotimus as metropolitan rather suggests his previous life in a monastery and even the status of hegumen (the leader of the community) there for a while.

Whatever the case, Theotimus' appearance ("the long hair") reveals the knowledge of this monastic lifestyle and of its specific practices in Roman Scythia at that time. Their spread there could have been mediated by the Christians arrived in the province from the rest of the empire (such as Christian missionaries).

In his work *On Illustrious Men*, written between 19 January 392 and 18 January 393, Jerome of Stridon presents Theotimus as "bishop of Tomi in Scythia".¹¹⁷ This information shows that he was elected bishop of Tomi before 392. His election (as a monk) to lead the Church in Scythia was most probably due to the admiration of the Christians there for his severe ascetic life, for his good theological formation and, last but not least, for his fame as a wonder-worker.¹¹⁸ Besides, the testimonies of Socrates Scholasticus and Sozomen show that the renown of Theotimus as a saint was widely spread among his contemporaries. The first one describes him as "a bishop celebrated for his piety and rectitude of life,"¹¹⁹ and Sozomen states that his holiness was known also by the Huns in the Lower Danube: "his virtues had so won the admiration of the barbarian Huns ... that they called him the god of the Romans, for they had experience of divine deeds wrought by him."¹²⁰ In order to strengthen this assertion, Sozomen recorded two of the miracles performed by Theotimus during his meeting with some of the Huns. From the context of the two miracles, it appears that the metropolitan was personally involved,

115 Sozomen, *The Ecclesiastical History* III.14, p. 652: "although the Thracians, the Illyrians, and the other European nations were still inexperienced in monastic communities, yet they were not altogether lacking in men devoted to [monastic] philosophy."

116 See below, chapter 13: 'Monasteries on the territory between the Danube and the Black Sea during 4th–7th centuries AD.'

117 Alan D. Booth, "The Chronology of Jerome's Early Years," *Phoenix* 35 (1981), p. 241.

118 Similarly, Șerbănescu, "1600 de ani," p. 1009; Rămureanu, „Sfinți și martiri,” p. 1007; Ielciu, „Teologi din Scythia Minor,” pp. 316 and 318. The faithful Christians were impressed by such ascetics and wanted them as leaders of their communities. Such is the case of Bishop Narcissus of Jerusalem—see above, chapter 8: 'A historical survey of Eastern monasticism.'

119 Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* VI.12.7, in *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Christian Hansen Günther, (Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller) 1 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995), p. 334⁸; trans. Chester D. Hartranft, (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers) 11/2 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 371.

120 Sozomenos, *Historia ecclesiastica* VII.26.6, p. 341^{22–24}; trans., p. 885.

together with his staff, in preaching the Christian faith to the Huns. Sozomen does not mention if any of the staff were also monks, but this possibility may be considered. It would be an adaptation of the monks in Scythia to the political and military realities in the region, by their involvement in preaching the Gospel to the barbarians from the Lower Danube.

Theotimus seems to have collaborated also with John Chrysostom in this missionary effort.¹²¹ Theodoret of Cyrrhus mentions that the latter, finding out about the possibility to convert to Christianity the nomads encamped along the Danube, sent missionaries to them.¹²² Besides, the two hierarchs were close to one another due to their ascetic preoccupations, to the strict observance of Christian morality, and to their theological opinions (see below).¹²³

It is not excluded for some of the monks in Scythia to have been involved also in charitable activities carried out in the province under the tutelage of the local Church at that time. These actions may be regarded as a continuation of those previously attested in the province, at the time of Vetrario and Junius Soranus. Their existence also at the time of Theotimus, as well as the implication of the latter and of his staff (possibly monks/ascetics, both men and women) in their progress can be inferred from some of Sozomen's assertions. According to him, Theotimus would offer food and various gifts to the Huns in order to soften their aggressive behaviour.¹²⁴ This also shows the preoccupation of the hierarch with helping the needy members of his community. The church historian also mentions that calming the Huns aimed also at

121 Zeiller, *Les origines*, pp. 547–548; Coman, *Scrittori bisericești*, p. 187; Șerbănescu, “1600 de ani,” pp. 1010–1011; Rămureanu, “Sfinți și martiri,” p. 1009; Rămureanu, *Actele martirice*, p. 347; Popescu, “Sfântul Teotim,” p. 168; Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii*, p. 146; Ioasaf Ganea, “Teotim I, mare figură de ierarh misionar în Sciția Minor, la finele secolului IV și începutul secolului V” [Theotimus I, a Great Missionary Hierarch in Scythia Minor, at the End of the 4th Century and the Beginning of the 5th], *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 109 (1992), nos. 4–6, p. 105; Zugravu, *Geneza*, p. 242; Vicovan, “Străromânul Teotim,” pp. 349–350; Dură, „*Scythia Minor*,” p. 39.

122 Theodoretus Cyrensis, *Historia ecclesiastica* v.31.1–2, in *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Léon Parmentier, (Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller) 19 (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1911), pp. 330¹⁹–331⁵; Theodoret of Cyrrhus, *The Ecclesiastical History*, trans. and notes Blomfield Jackson, (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers) 11/3 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1969), p. 352.

123 See Ionuț Holubeanu, “A participat Sfântul Theotim I de Tomis la sinodul de la *Ad Quercum* din 403 p. Chr.?” [Did Saint Theotim I of Tomis Participate at the *Ad Quercum* Synod in AD 403?], *Pontica* 46 (2013), pp. 403–417.

124 This was certainly also a technique used by the missionaries to obtain the barbarians' good will before preaching them the Christian faith.

stopping them from robbing the local population.¹²⁵ This statement confirms Theotimus' preoccupation with protecting the inhabitants of the province. In these conditions, it seems natural for him to have also been involved (together with his staff) in the organization or, if they already existed, in the good functioning of the social assistance institutions in Scythia.

Jerome also mentions that Theotimus "has published short treatises in the form of dialogues and in the old style of *incisi*. I hear that he has composed other works besides this."¹²⁶ Only several short passages were preserved from Theotimus' writings. They are reproduced by John of Damascus in *Sacred Parallels*. Their core is the urge to free one's mind of the concern for material needs and to think continually of God (the continual prayer) ("To remember God means to remember life, and to forget Him means to die"¹²⁷), in order to achieve the peace of mind:

There is no beautiful thought in the troubled and care-worn mind and God's grace cannot flow over it. Reaching the perfection of the soul means to free it from worries, as they destroy it. That is why the perfect soul is said to be like a lily among thorns. As the lily of the Gospel (Mt. 6:28) means the soul devoid of worries. ... About those who take care only of the bodily needs, the Holy Scripture says: 'All the life of an ungodly man is spent in anxiety' (Job 15:20). ... That is why Jeremiah says in his *Lamentations* that: 'Those brought up on the best food are clothed with dung' (Lam. 4:5). When we persevere, indeed, in bright and ardent thoughts, then we are dressed in purple, but when we are attracted by the transient things of this world, then we cover ourselves with dirt.¹²⁸

125 Sozomenos, *Historia ecclesiastica* VII.26.8, p. 342³⁻⁴: "As they [i.e., the Huns] frequently injured the Scythians [i.e., the inhabitants of Roman Scythia], he tried to subdue the ferocity of their disposition by presenting them with food and gifts."

126 Hieronymus, *Liber de viris inlustribus* CXXXI, eds. Ernest Cushing Richardson and Oscar von Gebhardt, (Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur) 14/1b (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1896), pp. 54²²⁻²⁴; Saint Jerome, *On Illustrious Men*, trans. Thomas P. Halton (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1999), p. 164.

127 Joannes Damascenus, *Sacra Paralella* Δ/1, PG 96:520.

128 Joannes Damascenus, *Sacra Paralella* Σ/19, PG 96:364. See also PG 96:241, 320, 364, 525, and 533. The paragraph of col. 525 (Z/1) is attributed to "Θεοτίμου ἐπισκόπου Σκυθοπόλεως" ("Theotimus bishop of Scythopolis"), but 'Scythopolis' (a city in Palestine) is considered an erroneous form of 'Σκυθίας' ('of Scythia'): "Θεοτίμου ἐπισκόπου Σκυθίας" ("Theotimus bishop of Scythia")—see Otto Bardenhewer, *Geschichte der altkirchlichen literatur*, 3 (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1923), p. 605; Zeiller, *Les origines*, p. 548, n. 4; Rămureanu, *Actele martirice*, p. 346, n. 20.

These exhortations show that Theotimus was a hesychast, practising the continual prayer. At the same time, the writing of these axioms reveals his preoccupation with guiding the Christians he was leading and particularly the monks. It may be supposed that his writings were copied and sent to the local coenobia, to be read and practised by the monks. In fact, the ideas exposed in the sentences of Theotimus are similar to the ideal of the coenobite described by John Cassian in his writings:

The aim indeed of the coenobite is to mortify and crucify all his desires and, according to that salutary command of evangelical perfection, to take no thought for the morrow. And it is perfectly clear that this perfection cannot be attained by any except a coenobite.¹²⁹

This proves that Theotimus wished to guide the monks living in local coenobia toward the real purpose of their life: achieving peace of mind.¹³⁰

Socrates and Sozomen present another episode of Theotimus' life, relevant to the high level of his theological formation. In 402/403, during the Origenist crisis, Epiphanius of Salamis came to Constantinople bringing the documents of a synod where Origen's writings had been condemned. The Cypriot hierarch convoked the bishops who were in the imperial capital and urged them to express their adhesion to the respective synodal decisions. Some of those who were present signed them out of respect for Epiphanius, but others refused to do it. Theotimus was one of the last-mentioned category. After having listened to the condemnation sentence of Origen's writings read by Epiphanius, the Tomitan metropolitan took a stand saying:

'... I [i.e., Theotimus] know of no evil doctrine contained in Origen's books.' Having said this, he brought forward one of that author's works, and reading a few passages therefrom, showed that the sentiments propounded were in perfect accordance with the orthodox faith. He then added, 'Those who speak evil of these writings are unconsciously casting dishonor upon the sacred volume whence their principles are drawn.'¹³¹

129 *Conlationes* XIX.8.3, p. 542¹⁴⁻¹⁸; trans., p. 1258.

130 See also Coman, *Scrîtori bisericești*, p. 193; Epifanie Norocel, *Pagini din istoria veche a creștinismului la români. Mărturii ale continuității poporului nostru* [Pages of the Early History of Romanian Christianity. Testimonies of the Continuity of Our People] (Buzău: Editura Episcopiei Buzăului, 1986), p. 76; Ion Ionescu, "Vechimea vieții mănăstirești la români" [The Antiquity of Monastic Life among Romanians], *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 114 (1996), nos. 1-6, p. 334.

131 Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* VI.12.5-6, p. 334³⁻⁷; trans., p. 371.

Sozomen mentions that Theotimus read at that moment from Origen's work "a passage conducive to the education of the Church."¹³² Some scholars¹³³ also considered the possibility that the book brought by the metropolitan of Tomi may have been *Philocalia*, the anthology of Origen's texts compiled by Basil the Great and Gregory of Nazianzus in the late 350s to early 360s.¹³⁴ Nevertheless, the statements of the church historians (Socrates and Sozomen) show that there was one of the author's original books, and not a compilation: "a book of Origen" ("βιβλίον <τι> Ὀριγένους") and "a book from those of Origen" ("βιβλίον τι τῶν Ὀριγένους"), respectively.¹³⁵ Moreover, both versions prove that Theotimus was familiar with the writings of the great Alexandrian theologian. Besides, Origen's influence on the theological formation of the metropolitan of Tomi can be noticed also from the exegetical method he used in the interpretation of the Holy Scripture (see above). Furthermore, the writings of the two church historians also show that Theotimus knew the Greek language very well. That is why he had direct access to the theological literature written in this language. His books were most probably written in Greek, as well.¹³⁶ This aspect pleads in favour of the current use of this language by the monks in the province at that time.

Another information shows Theotimus' preoccupation with defending the Catholic faith and protecting his Christians from heresies, like those who preceded him in the episcopal see of Tomi (Vetranio and Gerontius). Within the Council of Chalcedon, a certain archimandrite Carosus, that led a monastery in Constantinople, stated that when he was baptized by Theotimus in Tomi, the latter urged him to keep the Nicene doctrine unaltered.¹³⁷

The cordial relations between Theotimus and John Chrysostom are also important for the present topic. As already shown, based on the documentary information preserved, historians suppose that the two hierarchs collaborated in their effort to spread Christianity among the barbarians of the Lower Danube. At the same time, Palladius' account shows that Theotimus was one

132 Sozomenos, *Historia ecclesiastica* VIII.14.8, p. 368¹⁹⁻²⁰; trans., p. 914.

133 Coman, *Scrîitori bisericești*, pp. 189–190. See also Popescu, "Martiri și sfinți (1)," p. 64; Ioan G. Coman, "Însemnări asupra lui Teotim de Tomis" [Notes on Theotimus of Tomi], *Glasul Bisericii* 16 (1957), no. 1, p. 48; Vornicescu, *Primele scrieri patristice*, p. 46.

134 Peter C. Bouteneff, *Beginnings: Ancient Christian Readings of the Biblical Creation Narratives* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), pp. 124–125.

135 Socrates, *Historia ecclesiastica* VI.12.5, p. 334⁴⁻⁵; trans., p. 371; Sozomenos, *Historia ecclesiastica* VIII.14.8, p. 368¹⁸⁻¹⁹; trans., p. 914.

136 Bardenhewer, *Geschichte*, p. 605.

137 See below, subchapter 12.1: 'Archimandrite Carosus.'

of John Chrysostom's counsellors within the Home Synod of 400.¹³⁸ The episode reveals John Chrysostom's appreciation of Theotimus, as well as the moral values shared by both of them. On the other hand, a proof of the similar theological approach of the two of them and even of the friendship between them is Theotimus' rejection of Epiphanius of Salamis' proposal to condemn Origen's writings. By doing this, the Tomitan hierarch indirectly rejected the accusation of Origenism that was brought to John Chrysostom at that time.

Their similar theological opinions, as well as the observance of the same moral values plead in favour of a common vision also concerning monastic life. The more so as they were both followers of monastic philosophy, which involved their concern for its proper practice. In the case of Theotimus, his effort of guiding the monks in Scythia by his writings has already been shown. The picture may be completed with the information regarding John Chrysostom's similar efforts. It is mainly his attempt to transfer the monks in Constantinople under his guidance and to interdict their leaving the monasteries without his consent.¹³⁹ These principles were later imposed by the canons of the Council of Chalcedon.¹⁴⁰ It is not excluded that they might have been inspired or, at least, that their validity may have been confirmed to Chrysostom by the monastic rule of Basil the Great, who, in his turn, sustained the transfer of monasteries under the guidance of the bishops, as well as kept the good order within any coenobium. The study of Basil's rule in John Chrysostom's milieu is suggested by the fact that John Cassian, one of the deacons of the archbishop of Constantinople at that time, knew the rule very well. Cassian mentions it in his Preface to *Institutes*. The fact that he knew the scriptural argumentation exposed within its contents shows that he had also read them, not just knowing of their existence.¹⁴¹ Cassian may have studied the Basilian rule in Constantinople, not in Palestine or in Egypt.

138 Palladios, *Dialogus* XIII, p. 280⁴⁹⁻⁵²: "the oldest bishops (οἱ γέροντες τῶν ἐπισκόπων, i.e., Theotimus of Tomi, Ammon of Thrace, and Arabianus of Galatia) ... said to John: "Without doubt, each single point of each single count is impious, and forbidden from every point of view by the sacred laws."

139 Sozomenos, *Historia ecclesiastica* 8.9.4-5, p. 362⁷⁻¹³; trans., 906: "John [Chrysostom] had several disputes with many of the monks, particularly with Isaac. He highly commended those who remained in quietude in the monasteries and practiced philosophy there; he protected them from all injustice and solicitously supplied whatever necessities they might have. But the monks who went out of doors and made their appearance in cities, he reproached and regarded as insulting philosophy. For these causes, he incurred the hatred of the clergy, and of many of the monks, ..."

140 See above, the end of chapter 8: 'A historical survey of Eastern monasticism', pp. 209-210.

141 *Instituta* praef.5, p. 5¹⁸⁻²⁰; trans., p. 401: "when the brethren asked [Saint Basil] about various rules and questions, [he] replied in language that was not only eloquent but rich in testimonies from Holy Scripture."

John Chrysostom's attempt to reorganize Constantinopolitan monasticism proved to be a failure. The monks in the imperial capital raised against him and their leader, Isaac, was one of Chrysostom's accusers at the Synod of the Oak.¹⁴²

In what concerns Scythia, those exposed above pleaded in favour of the idea that Theotimus himself, like John Chrysostom, sustained the grouping of the monks from his province into coenobia. Within them, monks were provided with what they needed for every-day life, with a view to their total dedication to the achievement of the peace of mind. This also supposes the extension of the Tomitan hierarch's jurisdiction over all monastic settlements and the application within them of efficient organization rule, such as that written by Basil the Great. As already shown, Basilian rule may have been known and even implemented in Scythia back from Vetrician's time. Moreover, Theotimus' preoccupation with guiding the ascetic efforts of the monks in Scythia by his writings reveals a certain dissatisfaction with the level of spiritual living of the monks in the province and his attempt to solve this problem. Finally, the observation that this approach took place in a period when the province was affected by barbarian attacks is also important. This demonstrates that monasticism continued its existence even in those difficult times, an aspect also confirmed by the results of archaeological discoveries.¹⁴³

Given the situation in Scythia, where faithful Christians respected their hierarch (as shown by Sozomen's testimony regarding keeping the Catholic faith in the province), Theotimus, unlike John Chrysostom, is supposed to have managed to impose his vision on the organization of monastic life. The raising of the monks' level of spiritual living seems to have been not a complete success there, however. An indication in this respect is represented by the events that happened at the time of Timothy, Theotimus' successor in the episcopal see.¹⁴⁴ However, even so, the period of the latter's spiritual guidance can be considered as one of complete affirmation of monastic life in Scythia. His election, as one of the local monks, in the episcopal see of Tomi may be regarded as the act of integration or of officialization of monasticism in the church life of the province. With him, monasticism left the private sphere and passed on to the public one, becoming one of the leading institutions of the Church in Roman Scythia. As such, monasticism became more and more present in the every-day life of the Christians (by education, the implication in charitable

142 See Gilbert Dagron, "Les moines et la ville. La monachisme à Constantinople jusqu'au concile de Chalcédoine (451)," in *Travaux et Mémoires*, 4, (Centre de recherche d'histoire et civilisation byzantines) (Paris: De Boccard, 1970), pp. 261–265.

143 See below, chapter 13: 'Monasteries on the territory between the Danube and the Black Sea during 4th–7th centuries AD.'

144 See below, subchapter 12.3.4: 'The doctrine of salvation of the Scythian monks.'

activities, and in preaching the Christian faith) and received a central role in the life of the local Church (by defending the doctrine of faith and the occupation of the leading functions within it) (see below).

11.5 The Holy Martyrs of Niculițel

In the summer of 1971, a crypt with relics of martyrs was discovered in the present-day village of Niculițel (Tulcea County, Romania), in northern Dobruja. The crypt is divided into two bunk compartments. In its upper part, there were the whole bodies of four martyrs, placed in a common wooden coffin. Their names are mentioned in one of the inscriptions on the crypt's wall: Zotikos, Attalos, Kamasis, and Philippos. In the lower part of the crypt small fragments of bones (some of them having burning traces) of two other martyrs were identified. In this case, only their martyric death is indicated (in another inscription): "Here and there [is] the martyrs' blood."¹⁴⁵ Archaeological research has uncovered the remains of a basilica built during the last decades of the 4th century. It was established that its crypt, placed under the presbytery, had been built in the same period.¹⁴⁶ As the relics of Zotikos, Attalos, Kamasis, and Philippos were found in anatomical position, it was concluded that they had been killed not long before the building of the basilica, most probably during the persecution of Julian the Apostate (361–363).¹⁴⁷

The martyrs' names, Zotikos, Attalos, Kamasis, and Philippos, are mentioned on 4 June in the *Martyrology of Jerome*.¹⁴⁸ On the same day, the *Syriac*

145 Victor H. Baumann, *Sângele Martirilor* [The Blood of the Martyrs] (Constanța: Editura Dobrogea, 2015), p. 221.

146 Baumann, *Sângele Martirilor*, p. 218.

147 Baumann, *Sângele Martirilor*, p. 219; Alexandru Madgearu, "Martyrs from the Danubian Limes during the Reign of Galerius," in *Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference History and Theology, Constanța (Romania), November 17–18, 2020*, ed. Ionuț Holubeanu (Bucharest: Editura Universitară, 2021), p. 68, n. 37. First, several scholars have dated the death of the four martyrs to the first quarter of the 4th century, during the reign of Diocletian or Licinius—see Ion Barnea, "Un martirium descoperit la Niculițel, jud. Tulcea" [A Martyrium Discovered at Niculitel, Tulcea County], *Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche* 24 (1973), no. 1, p. 125; Ion Barnea, "Martyrion-ul de la Niculițel" [The Martyrion of Niculițel], *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 91 (1973), nos. 1–2, p. 221; Emilian Popescu, "Sfinții Zoticos, Attalos, Kamasis și Philippos" [Saints Zoticus, Attalus, Kamasis, and Philip], in *Sfinți români și apărători ai legii strămoșești*, p. 176; Emilian Popescu, "Martiri și sfinți în Dobrogea (11)" [Martyrs and Saints in Dobruja (11)], *Studii Teologice* 41 (1989), no. 4, p. 72.

148 *Martyrologium Hieronymianum*, in *Acta Sanctorum Novembris*, 2/1, eds. Giovanni Battista De Rossi and Louis Duchesne (Brussels: Socii Bollandiani, 1894), p. 75.

Martyrology of 411 (Breviarium syriacum) mentions the name of Philip.¹⁴⁹ In both documents, they are attributed to the city of Noviodunum (now Isaccea, Romania) (*Nividuno civitate* and ἐν [N]οβιοδοῦνῳ, respectively) in Roman Scythia, situated on the Danube shore, at approximately 10 km northwards of the place where the crypt was discovered.

Of interest for the current study is the result of the anthropological expertise carried out on the relics of the four martyrs. According to it, “all bones responded to the osteoporosis and osteophytosis analysis; these are metabolic disorders caused by long time lacks, and could be explained by an ascetic kind of life.” It was also revealed that three of them had been approximately 50 years of age, whereas one of them had been not more than 35 years old, that they all had Oriental origins and belonged to the same ethnic group.¹⁵⁰

The ascetic living and the period when they suffered martyrdom plead in favour of their inclusion in the category of monks. Given their Oriental origin, they were most probably ascetics who arrived in Roman Scythia from one of the eastern provinces of the empire. Another possibility is that they may have been born into families of Oriental origins settled in Scythia for some time. Nevertheless, in such a case, at least one of them would have been expected to belong to another ethnic group. Therefore, their origins from outside the province seems more credible, being possibly related to the wish to preach the Christian faith either in Roman Scythia, or in trans-Danubian Gothia.

In what concerns the complex of Niculițel, certain scholars considered that a monastery may have existed there, based on the ascetic living of the martyrs Zotikos, Attalos, Kamasis, and Philippos.¹⁵¹ Moreover, the place was protected by a thick forest. However, there is no certain archaeological evidence that could be used to support this idea. Still, the possibility for some monks to have lived near this martyrium over the 4th–6th centuries ought to be considered.

149 *Breviarium syriacum*, in *Acta Sanctorum Novembris*, 2/1, eds. Giovanni Battista De Rossi and Louis Duchesne (Brussels: Socii Bollandiani, 1894), p. LVIII.

150 See Victor H. Baumann, “Bazilica cu «martyrion» din epoca romanității târzii, descoperită la Niculițel (jud. Tulcea) [Basilica with «Martyrion» from the Late Roman Period Discovered in Niculițel (Tulcea County)], *Buletinul Monumentelor Istorice* 41 (1972), p. 26; Baumann, *Sângele Martirilor*, pp. 138–139 and 219–221.

151 Vasile Iorgulescu, “Mărturii privind monahismul pe pământul românesc înaintea Sfântului Nicodim” [Testimonies concerning Monasticism on the Romanian Territory before Saint Nicodemus of Tismana], *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 101 (1983), nos. 3–4, p. 255; Sebastian Dumitru Cârstea, *Monahismul ardelean în trecut și astăzi* [Transylvanian Monasticism in the Past and Today] (Sibiu: Andreiana, 2008), p. 14; Mișu, “Monahismul daco-roman,” pp. 301–302; Ioan Aurel Pop, “Viața bisericească și monahismul de rit bizantin pe teritoriul României până la 1300” [Ecclesiastical Life and Byzantine Rite Monasticism on the Territory of Romania until 1300], in *Monahismul ortodox românesc*, 1, p. 349.

Such cases are attested in other parts of the Christian East. The Spanish pilgrim Egeria noted having seen some monks living near the martyr shrines at Edessa (in 348).¹⁵² Similar cases are also known in Constantinople in 451.¹⁵³ The supposed monastic affiliation of the four martyrs supports the existence of such a situation also at Niculițel.

152 Egeria, *Diary of a Pilgrimage*, trans. George E. Gingras, (Ancient Christian Writers) 38 (New York/Paramus, New Jersey: Newman Press, 1970), p. 77.

153 In the documents of the Council of Chalcedon (451) Constantinopolitan monks who were martyr-shrine guardians or attendants are attested—see Richard Price and Michael Gaddis, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, 2, (Translated Texts for Historians) 45 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), pp. 153–154; Dagron, “Les moines et la ville,” pp. 243 (n. 80) and 255; Daniel Caner, *Wandering, Begging Monks. Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity* (Berkeley/Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2002), pp. 228–235.

Monasticism in Roman Scythia in the Textual Sources during the 5th–7th Centuries AD

12.1 Archimandrite Carosus

The literary sources provide no information about monasticism in Roman Scythia during the first half of the 5th century. The evolution of monastic life there at that time can be inferred from sources dating to the second half of the 5th century and the first quarter of the 6th century. In what follows, I present a piece of information from the middle of the 5th century that completes the image of local monasticism at the time of Theotimus I of Tomi (c.390–c.407). It is also related to the Christological debates in which the monks in Scythia were involved at the end of the 5th century and the first quarter of the following century.

During the Council of Chalcedon (451), Patriarch Dioscorus of Alexandria (444–451) was supported by a group of monks led by a certain archimandrite Carosus, head of one of the monasteries in the imperial capital. The name of a presbyter and archimandrite Carosus is mentioned for the first time in the signatories list at the end of the seventh session (22 November) of the Home Synod of 448. The same name appears also in three of the letters of Pope Leo I (440–461): nos. 136 (29 May 454), 142 (13 March 455), and 141 (11 May 455). Certain scholars consider that all of these documents mention two people with the same name.¹ The one who is of interest for the present investigation is certainly mentioned in the documents from Chalcedon and in the papal letter 142. These are, in fact, the most important sources related to his case. It is possible for the same Carosus to appear in the signatories list of 448, as well as in the

1 Eduard Schwartz, “Prosopographia et topographia actorum Chalcedonensium et Encyclicorum,” in *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum* (hereafter cited as *ACO*), 11/6, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1938), p. 77; Heinrich Bacht, “Die Rolle des Orientalischen Mönchtums in den kirchenpolitischen Auseinandersetzungen um Chalkedon (431–519),” in *Das Konzil von Chalkedon: Geschichte und Gegenwart. Entscheidung um Chalkedon*, 2, eds. Aloys Grillmeier and Heinrich Bacht (Würzburg: Echter-Verlag, 1954), pp. 237 (n. 38) and 243 (n. 71); Alois Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 2/1, trans. Pauline Allen and John Cawte (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987), p. 105, n. 37.

papal letter 136.² The information exposed in the last-mentioned documents is not essential. Finally, the second Carosus certainly appears in letter 141.

The Home Synod of 448 was chaired by Archbishop Flavian of Constantinople (446–449). The case of the Constantinopolitan archimandrite Eutyches, accused of heresy, was debated at that time. His teaching was condemned and, as he refused to abjure it, he was stripped of his priestly rank and excommunicated.³ Carosus' signature appears in the final part of the signatories list, among those of the archimandrites: "Carosus presbyter and archimandrite, I have signed the deposition of Eutyches."⁴ Carosus' acceptance of the deposition of Eutyches is in contrast with his later refuse to accept the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon. Nevertheless, he may have accepted the synodal decisions of 448 under the pressure of Constantinopolitan church authorities.⁵ Furthermore, within the Second Council of Ephesus (449), Eutyches claimed that the monks whose signatures were at the end of the list of 22 November 448 (nos. 31–53) signed the document forced by Archbishop Flavian, and after the synod concluded.⁶ Therefore, it is not excluded that archimandrite Carosus, the same with the one in 451, may have ceded in 448 to the pressures exerted on him, accepting the condemnation of Eutyches.

Later, Carosus asserted himself as a supporter of Patriarch Dioscorus of Alexandria and, implicitly, of the doctrine of faith promoted by him. Together with other monks, he wrote two memoirs addressed to Emperor Marcian (450–457), one before the council opening and the other during its sessions, as well as a complaint addressed to the participants of the council. In the first memoir, the signatories expressed their adhesion to the emperor's decision of calling a new ecumenical council and required the following: (i.) the emperor's intervention in order to stop the collection of signatures by force and the harassment exerted by church authorities over those who had other theological opinions; (ii.) the emperor's preventing of the expulsion from

2 Richard Price and Michael Gaddis [*The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, 2, (Translated Texts for Historians) 45 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), p. 165] identify Carosus of letter 136 with that of Chalcedon, whereas Heinrich Bacht ("Die Rolle," p. 243, n. 71) considers that he is the second Carosus, mentioned in the Papal letter 141.

3 Alois Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 1/2, 2nd ed., trans. John Bowden (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1975), pp. 523–525.

4 *ACO*, 11/1.1, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1933), p. 147²², no. 49: "Κάρωσος πρεσβύτερος καὶ ἀρχιμανδριτῆς ὑπέγραψα τῇ καθαιρέσει Εὐτυχοῦς."

5 See *ACO*, 11/1.2, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1933), p. 116 [312]^{14–15}; *ACO*, 11/3.2, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1936), p. 121 [380]^{24–25}; Price and Gaddis, *The Acts*, 2, pp. 155–156, and also Bacht, "Die Rolle," pp. 237–238.

6 See *ACO*, 11/1.1, pp. 95³⁵–96⁴; Price and Gaddis, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, 1, (Translated Texts for Historians) 45 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2005), pp. 163–164.

monasteries of the monks considered guilty by church authorities, before the adoption of clear decisions within the council already convoked.⁷ In the complaint addressed to the synod members, the monks required the readmission of the archbishop of Alexandria to the council.⁸ The complaint resulted from the fact that, at the end of the first session of Chalcedon, Dioscorus had been deposed and excluded from the works of the council.⁹ Both the memoir submitted to the emperor and the complaint addressed to the participants in the council were read within the fourth session of Chalcedon (17 October). That was also the moment of the first investigation of the recalcitrant archimandrites, including Carosus.¹⁰

After that moment, Carosus and the other monks submitted the second memoir to the emperor, whose text was not preserved. Certain allusions to its content show that the signatories continued to sustain the cause of the archbishop of Alexandria.¹¹

On 20 October 451, the Synod members judged the case of these archimandrites. They were summoned to accept the decrees of the Council, being given a delay of a month to make a decision. Otherwise, they would be stripped of their rank and of priestly dignity, and excluded from the headship of their monasteries.¹²

On 29 May 454, at approximately two years and a half from the end of the Council of Chalcedon, Pope Leo I addressed a letter to Emperor Marcian (no. 136), where he pointed that archimandrite Carosus continued to lead a campaign of denigration of the Council of Chalcedon decrees.¹³ In the

7 *ACO*, II/1.2, pp. 115 [311]⁴⁰–116 [312]²⁴; *ACO*, II/3.2, pp. 121 [380]⁸–122 [381]⁷; Price and Gaddis, *The Acts*, 2, pp. 155–156.

8 *ACO*, II/1.2, pp. 117 [313]^{3–12} and 117 [313]²⁵–118 [314]²; *ACO*, II/3.2, pp. 122 [381]²⁶–123 [382]⁶ and 123 [382]¹⁸–124 [383]⁸; Price and Gaddis, *The Acts*, 2, pp. 155–156.

9 *ACO*, II/1.1, pp. 195¹⁰–196⁶; *ACO*, II/3.1, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1935), pp. 258¹³–259¹⁷; *ACO*, II/3.2, pp. 123 [382]¹⁸–124 [383]⁸; Price and Gaddis, *The Acts*, 1, pp. 364–365.

10 *ACO*, II/1.2, pp. 114 [310]²⁰–121 [317]⁵; *ACO*, II/3.2, pp. 119 [378]¹⁶–128 [387]⁵; Price and Gaddis, *The Acts*, 2, pp. 153–163.

11 See Price and Gaddis, *The Acts*, 2, pp. 165 and 167 (n. 9).

12 *ACO*, II/1.3, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1935), pp. 99 [458]²⁵–101 [460]²⁸; Price and Gaddis, *The Acts*, 2, pp. 166–168.

13 *ACO*, II/4, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1932), p. 91^{19–23}. Timothy E. Gregory [*Vox Populi. Popular Opinion and Violence in the Religious Controversies of the Fifth Century A.D.* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1979), p. 197, n. 74] considers that Carosus had not been removed from Constantinople due to the disagreement between Pope Leo I and Archbishop Anatolius of Constantinople (449–458). From his point of view, the latter was suspected by the pope of Monophysite sympathies. On the other hand, Richard Price and Michael Gaddis (*The Acts*, 2, p. 165) consider that the delay

following year, on 13 March 455, the pope congratulated the emperor for the removal of archimandrites Carosus and Dorotheus from the headship of their monasteries and sending them to places where they could do no harm (letter no. 142).¹⁴ From that moment onward, Constantinopolitan archimandrite Carosus disappeared from the historical scene.

The main accusation Carosus and the monks associated with him brought against the participants in the Council of Chalcedon was that they altered the doctrine of faith exposed in the Nicene faith by approving what they saw as dogmatic additions exposed in the Tome of Pope Leo I.¹⁵ The archimandrites mentioned this point of view even when it was explained to them that by the papal document the Nicene faith was not changed, but only interpreted in a more detailed manner.¹⁶

Important to the current topic are two pieces of information on Carosus, exposed within the documents of Chalcedon. The first one can be found in his speech delivered at the end of the fourth session of Chalcedon (17 October 451). When he was asked by those who investigated him if he accepted the decisions of the council, Carosus answered:

I recognize the creed of the 318 fathers who were at Nicaea, in which I was baptized, since I do not recognize any other creed. ... When the holy Theotimus baptized me at Tomi, he told me not to believe in anything else.¹⁷

in removing Carosus and Dorotheus, his associate, was due to their popularity, which led to the emperor's reticence in taking provocative actions.

14 *ACO*, II/4, p. 95²⁰⁻²⁶.

15 *ACO*, II/1.2, pp. 117 [313]³⁸⁻¹¹⁸ [314]², 118 [314]²²⁻²⁶, 119 [315]¹⁶⁻¹⁷, and 120 [316]²⁵⁻³⁶; *ACO*, II/3.2, pp. 124 [383]³⁻⁸, 124 [383]²⁷⁻¹²⁵ [384]³, 125 [384]³⁴⁻¹²⁶ [385]¹, and 127 [386]¹⁷⁻²⁶; Price and Gaddis, *The Acts*, 2, pp. 158-162. The Tome of Leo I had also been approved in Constantinople before the Council of Chalcedon by a synod (21 October 450) chaired by Anatolius of Constantinople—see Paul P. Mouterde, "Fragment d'actes d'un synode tenu a Constantinople en 450," *Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph* 15 (1930), no. 2, pp. 33-50; Henry Chadwick, *The Church in Ancient Society: From Galilee to Gregory the Great*, (Oxford History of the Christian Church) (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 569.

16 *ACO*, II/1.2, pp. 118 [314]³⁷⁻¹¹⁹ [315]⁷; *ACO*, II/3.2, pp. 125 [384]¹⁵⁻²⁴ ff.; Price and Gaddis, *The Acts*, 2, pp. 160 ff.

17 *ACO*, II/1.2, p. 118 [314]²²⁻²⁶; *ACO*, II/3.2, pp. 124 [383]²⁷⁻¹²⁵ [384]³; Price and Gaddis, *The Acts*, 2, p. 159. Richard Price and Michael Gaddis (p. 159, n. 63) replace the name of Theotimus I of Tomi (that appears in most of the manuscripts) with that of Timothy of Tomi. The latter represented the Church in Scythia at the Council of Ephesus (431). The two scholars think that Timothy's name was mistaken for that of Theotimus II, who led the Church of Tomi after Chalcedon. In his turn, Henry Chadwick (*The Church*, p. 577, n. 8) identify Theotimus from Carosus' reference with the homonymous hierarch of Tomi

These words show that archimandrite Carosus had been baptised in Tomi, the metropolis of Scythia, by Theotimus I. Carosus was mature at that time, which permitted him to be granted a prior catechesis by the metropolitan. The latter, preoccupied with the keeping by the new convert of the Catholic faith, asked him to respect the Nicene Creed. This was a natural request, given that the baptism took place after decades of confrontations between the Catholic Church and the Arian groups, as well as before the beginning of the Nestorian controversy. Considering Carosus' age of approximately 60 years¹⁸ in 451, as well as the last possible year of spiritual guidance by Bishop Theotimus I (c.407), the future archimandrite seems to have been about 15, maybe 20 years old at that time.¹⁹

This information completes the picture of religious life in Roman Scythia by the turn of the 5th century, revealing the impetus of the episcopate of Theotimus I to the evolution of monastic life in the province. The metropolitan of Tomi seems to have been a spiritual mentor to a set of admirers, Carosus being the example of the youth who, impressed by the personality of the hierarch, decided to follow in his footsteps, embracing monastic life.

On the other hand, the information generates several questions: Was Carosus from Scythia or from outside the province? Where and when did he become a monk? How did he get to Constantinople? Did he keep in touch with theologians in Scythia after settling in Constantinople? Did he influence in any way, through his beliefs, the opinions of the theologians in Scythia? Were there older relations between Carosus' monastery in Constantinople and the province of Scythia?

Ioan Dură sustains Carosus' Constantinopolitan origin. According to Dură, Carosus' presence in Scythia had been determined by his admiration for the metropolitan of Tomi and by his wish to be baptised by him. The Greek origin

after Chalcedon. However, Carosus referred to Theotimus I of Tomi—see also Ioan Dură, “Sfântul Teotim I, episcopul Tomisului, invocat drept autoritate a dreptei credințe în cadrul lucrărilor Sinodului IV ecumenic (451)” [Holy Theotimus I of Tomi Invoked as Authority of the Catholic Faith in a Session of the Council of Chalcedon (451)], *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 106 (1988), nos. 5–6, pp. 92–96. The series of bishops of Tomi at that time was the following: Theotimus I (c.390–c.407), Timothy (c.431), Alexander (c.449–c.452), and Theotimus II (c.457/458).

18 Emilian Popescu, “Frühes mönchtum in Rumänien,” in Emilian Popescu, *Christianitas Daco-Romana* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1994), p. 233, n. 66.

19 The exact date of Theotimus I's death is not known. The specialized literature proposed the year 407, without any documentary basis. Most probably, scholars related his death to that of John Chrysostom (†407), even if there is no argument in favour of this opinion. Therefore, Theotimus could have died even later (c.410), which would lead to establishing an older age for Carosus at the moment of his baptism.

of his name was invoked as an argument in favour of this idea.²⁰ In the case of this hypothesis, it is easy to explain Carosus' settlement in Constantinople: after having received baptism and most probably after the death of the metropolitan of Tomi whom he admired, he came back to his native city. It is there that he eventually became the head of a monastery.

Even if the onomastic argument is not particularly strong, the hypothesis of Carosus' Constantinopolitan origin is still plausible. It is also supported by the fact that Theotimus is attested two times through documents in Constantinople (400 and 402/403) and that he had, as already shown, a special prestige among his contemporaries (not only in Roman Scythia, but also outside it). During one of these visits or of others (not known), Theotimus could have had relations with some of the Christians' families in the capital. After John Chrysostom's demotion and exile, Carosus' family (possibly admiring Chrysostom, but also Theotimus) may have taken refuge to Tomi, in order to avoid the persecutions launched against the former archbishop's sustainers.

On the other hand, the possibility for the young Carosus to have come from one of the families in Scythia could also be considered, as is the possibility that he may have been part of the Greek community in Tomi. A possible argument in this respect could be the relatively young age when Carosus received baptism (approximately 15–20 years).

Regardless of his origin, Carosus' admiration for Theotimus (whose memory was kept alive by him in 451) supports his becoming a monk in Scythia. His adoption of this style of living is the result of his direct relation with the metropolitan of Tomi, whose life and deeds seem to have particularly impressed him. In this case, Carosus had spent his first years as a monk in one of the coenobia in Roman Scythia. It is difficult to say what made him go to Constantinople afterwards, especially as it is not clear if the monastery in the capital, where he settled, had older relations with the Church in Scythia. If his Constantinopolitan origin is admitted, the explanation could be his wish to return to his native city after the death of Theotimus I. Another possible reason for his departure could be (irrespective of his origin) the hardships provoked in Scythia by the invasions of barbarians in the first half of the 5th century and the attraction exercised by the religious life in the capital. A third possible reason could be the troubles caused by the Nestorian crisis in the Church of Scythia.²¹

Most probably, Carosus left Scythia long before 451. It is the only explanation for the rank of archimandrite (head of the monastery) that he held at that

20 Dură, "Sfântul Teotim I," pp. 94–95.

21 See below, subchapter 12.3.4: 'The doctrine of salvation of the Scythian monks.'

time.²² He could have reached this function only if he had lived longer in the respective coenobium.

The most complex topic related to Carosus' personality regards the relations he had with Scythia after leaving the province. The comparison between his attitude towards the decisions of Chalcedon and that of the hierarchs of Tomi pleads in favour of the interruption of these relations. Within the council, Carosus refused to concede the Tome of Pope Leo I, in which the doctrine of one Christ in two natures was formulated. As shown by the pope's letters (nos. 136 and 142), Carosus also maintained his point of view after the end of the council's sessions.²³ On the other hand, the hierarchs of Tomi at that time were faithful to the position of the Catholic Church. Metropolitan Alexander is known to have attended the hearing at Constantinople of 13 April 449, where archimandrite Eutyches was condemned.²⁴ He later signed the dogmatic decisions of the Council of Chalcedon, after the completion of its sessions.²⁵ His successor, Theotimus II, expressed his attachment towards the decisions of Chalcedon, as well as to those adopted at the preceding ecumenical councils [Nicaea (325), Constantinople (381), and Ephesus I (431)], during the investigation on *Encyclia*.²⁶

Mention must be made of archimandrite Dorotheus' (associated to Carosus) confession of faith made at the end of the 4th session of Chalcedon, in his and his companions' name: "we profess that He who suffered is [one] of the Trinity, and I do not acknowledge any other creed." ("ὁμολογοῦμεν οὖν τὸν παθόντα ἐκ τῆς τριάδος εἶναι καὶ ἄλλην πίστιν οὐκ οἶδα"/"ergo credimus illum passum trinitatis esse et aliam fidem non nouimus").²⁷ The confession is similar to that of the monks in Roman Scythia, made in the first quarter of the 6th century: "One of the Holy Trinity suffered/was crucified in the flesh" ("*unus*

22 Carosus' rank of archimandrite (head of a monastery) was confirmed within the fourth session of the Council of Chalcedon—see *ACO*, II/1.2, p. 114 [310]³¹⁻³²; *ACO*, II/3.2, p. 119 [378]²⁶⁻²⁷; Price and Gaddis, *The Acts*, 2, pp. 153–154: "Κάρωσος καὶ Δωρόθεος ἀρχιμανδριταὶ εἰσιν" ("Carosus and Dorotheus are archimandrites").

23 *ACO*, II/4, pp. 91¹⁹⁻²¹ and 95²⁰⁻²³.

24 *ACO*, II/1.1, p. 148¹²; *ACO*, II/3.1, p. 132⁷⁻⁸; Price and Gaddis, *The Acts*, 1, p. 229.

25 *ACO*, II/3.2, p. 78 [337]²⁴; Price and Gaddis, *The Acts*, 2, p. 106.

26 *ACO*, II/5, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1936), p. 31²⁰⁻²⁷. Of utmost importance for the correct understanding of the viewpoint expressed by Theotimus II is the emendation made by Eduard Schwartz (p. 31, *apparatus* 23) to the extant letter of the metropolitan of Tomi.

27 *ACO*, II/1.2, p. 120 [316]²³⁻²⁴; *ACO*, II/3.2, p. 127 [386]¹⁵⁻¹⁶; Price and Gaddis, *The Acts*, 2, p. 162. The term 'one' ('*unus*') is mentioned in the oldest Latin version ('*eum qui passus est unum*')—see *ACO*, II/3.2, p. 127 [386], *versio antiqua* 16, and also Price and Gaddis, *The Acts*, 2, p. 162, n. 73.

de sancta trinitate passus/crucifixus est carne").²⁸ This raises the question of the latter's dependence on the doctrine of faith confessed by Dorotheus and Carosus. Moreover, after the Scythian monks' visit to Rome in 519–520 (see below), where they tried to obtain the approval of their theanthropopaschite theological formula by Pope Hormisdas, the Roman presbyter Trifolius reproached them the specific fact that, by their formula, they sustained the confession of faith of Dorotheus and Carosus, which had not been accepted by the Council of Chalcedon.²⁹ This possible dependence between the two theological formulas supports the hypothesis of the relation between Carosus and the monks in Scythia at least after the Council of Chalcedon. Furthermore, as shown by Pope Leo I's letters, Carosus was very active in denigrating the decisions of 451 and promoting his theological beliefs.³⁰ Therefore, it seems plausible that in his effort to attract as many people on his side, he may have addressed his former fellow-monks in Scythia.

The general picture of the church situation in the second half of the 5th century and the first quarter of the following, as well as the actions of the Scythian theologians from that time offer additional indications as to these two aspects (Carosus' attempt to attract the monks in Scythia on his side and the relation between the two theological formulas). As a result of the intense denigration of the decisions of Chalcedon, some church circles of the East had a distorted image of the council, namely that of a great "Nestorian victory."³¹ Unlike those who denigrated it, Scythian monks praise both the Council and Pope Leo I, appreciating the latter's contribution to the formulation of the doctrine of faith approved there.³² Furthermore, John Maxentius, their leader, fought in his

28 See below, subchapter 12.3: 'The Scythian monks.' The relation between the two theological formulas is also shown by Richard Price and Michael Gaddis (*The Acts*, 2, p. 162, n. 74).

29 Trifolius, *Epistula ad beatum Faustum senatorem contra Ioannem Scytham Monachum*, in *Scriptores Illyrici Minores*, ed. Salvator Gennaro, (Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina) 85 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1972), p. 139^{60–71}.

30 See *ACO*, II/4, pp. 91^{19–21} and 95^{20–23}.

31 Ernest Honigmann, "Juvenal of Jerusalem," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 5 (1950), p. 248.

32 Maxentius, *Libellus fidei*, in *Maxentii aliorumque scytharum monachorum necnon Ioannis Tomitanae urbis episcopi opuscula*, ed. François Glorie, (Corpus Christianorum, Series Latina) 85A (Turnhout: Brepols, 1978), p. 13^{161–163}; Matthew Joseph Pereira, *Reception, Interpretation and Doctrine in the Sixth Century: John Maxentius and the Scythian Monks* [Ph.D. thesis] (Columbia University, 2015), p. 536: "*Unam uero duarum naturarum subsistentiam siue personam, quam nobis ueneranda Chalcedonensis synodus tradidit ...*" ("In fact, [we, the Scythian monks] confess one subsistence or [one] personal identity having two natures, which the venerable Council of Chalcedon taught us"); p. 22³⁴¹/p. 540: "*suscipimus quattuor synodus*" ("we accept [the decrees of] four [ecumenical] Councils"); p. 8^{68–71}/p. 534: "*et beatum Leonem, qui similiter sanctorum patrum testimonis statuta*

writings [*Little Book of Faith* (*Libellus fidei*) and *Response Against the Ones without a Head* (*Responsio contra acephalos*)] the extreme Miaphysites (Monophysites), who rejected the decisions of the Council in 451. On the other hand, Scythian monks considered that the decisions of Chalcedon could be interpreted in a Nestorian way, which is an assertion that can be taken as an echo of the denigrations to which this Council had been subjected.³³ Besides, the monks in Scythia conceived their theological formula mainly to prevent the Nestorian interpretation of the Chalcedon decisions and named all those who rejected this formula (such as papal legate Dioscorus and the Constantinopolitan Acoemetae) as Nestorians.³⁴ This leads to the conclusion that the denigration of Chalcedon was known in Scythia and that it caused worries among local theologians. These concerns were totally natural, given that the Nestorian crisis had provoked many troubles in the province.³⁵ The worry of the Scythian theologians concerning the revival of Nestorianism after 451 is attested for the first time by documents in the last years of the 5th century. In 497, Metropolitan Peter of Tomi asked Dionysius Exiguus, who was in Rome, to send him a translation in Latin of the Synodal Letter of 430 (containing the Twelve Chapters of Cyril of Alexandria). In the Preface to the translation, Dionysius

-
- uenerabilis Chalcedonensis synodi cum fide patrum conuenire docuit;* (“and the blessed Leo, who in a similar way taught through the testimony of the holy fathers that the decrees of the venerable Council of Chalcedon agreed with the doctrine of the fathers”).
- 33 Maxentius, *Libellus fidei*, p. 5⁵⁻⁷; Pereira, *Reception*, p. 533: “*nos contra eos, qui inimico proposito uenerabilis Chalcedonensis concilii fidem ni<tun>tur euertere, patrum proferre sententias*” (“we, against those who, with hostile intention, endeavor to subvert the doctrine of the venerable Council of Chalcedon, cite the sentences of the fathers”). In his turn, the papal legate Dioscorus, in his letter (*suggestio*) addressed to Pope Hormisdas (514–523) on 15 October 519, told him that the Scythian monks argued that the Chalcedonian decrees were not sufficient against Nestorianism and needed to be supplemented—*Epistulae imperatorum pontificum aliorum inde ab a. CCCLXVII usque ad a. DLIII datae Avellana quae dicitur Collectio* (hereafter cited as *Avell. Coll.*), ed. Otto Günther, (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*) 35/2 (Prague/Vienna: F. Tempsky; Leipzig: G. Freytag, 1898), p. 686¹²⁻¹⁶: “*isti tamen Scythae ... omnes accipientes synodum Calcedonensem Nestorianos dicunt dicentes ‘non sufficit synodus contra Nestorium.’*” (“however, these Scythians ... declare Nestorians all who accept the Council of Chalcedon, saying that ‘the Council is not enough against Nestorius’”).
- 34 Dominic Moreau [“Les moines scythes néo-chalcédoniens (de Zaldapa?). Étude préliminaire à une prosopographie chrétienne du Diocèse des Thraces,” *Dobruđzha* 32 (2017), p. 201] states that Scythian monks considered the Acoemetae as monophysites/miaphysites. This is an erroneous statement, as Acoemetae were some of the fiercest defenders of the Council of Chalcedon (see also previous note).
- 35 See below, subchapter 12.3.4: ‘The doctrine of salvation of the Scythian monks.’

revealed the danger represented at that time by Nestorianism.³⁶ These words prove Peter's preoccupation with fighting this heresy.

In 451, Metropolitan Peter was a young monk, who had just entered the monastery (see below). Together with those of his generation, he must have been permanently preoccupied with the Christological debates that followed Chalcedon. The correspondence between Peter and Dionysius in 497 suggests that the metropolitan understood the need to conceive a new theological formula, meant to exclude the erroneous interpretations of the Christological doctrine. It is difficult to say if in 497 the theanthropopaschite theological Scythian formula already existed or was beginning to be formulated. It may be regarded as a fruit of the efforts of two generations of theologians in Scythia, that of Peter and that of John Maxentius. Moreover, the use by the latter, in his writings, of the Latin translation of the Twelve Chapters of Cyril of Alexandria, required of Dionysius by the metropolitan, reveals the collaboration between Peter and John Maxentius.

Metropolitan Peter's (and his monks') preoccupation with finding the new theological formula may have been also revived by the publication of the *Henotikon* by Emperor Zeno (474–491), in 482. The document generated the Acacian schism (484–519) between the Church of Rome and that of Constantinople.³⁷ As it appears from a statement of the Scythian monks (from whose ranks Metropolitan Peter also came), during the schism they remained in communion with the Western Churches, and not Constantinople.³⁸ This fact must have put a great deal of pressure on the metropolitan, who was a suffragan of the patriarch of Constantinople.

In what concerns Carosus, he may have been the one who first challenged (by contesting the decisions of Chalcedon) the theologians in Roman Scythia to find a solution for the disagreements that appeared after 451. The possibility for the formula sustained by him and Dorotheus as the basis for the theanthropopaschite one remains open. Nevertheless, even so, the theologians in Scythia did not take it verbatim, but completed it, bringing it to a fully Catholic

36 Dionisius Exiguus, *Praefatio ad Petrum episcopum* 1, in *Scriptores Illyrici Minores*, p. 59^{12–25}. Dionysius Exiguus pointed to the danger of Nestorianism and praised the eagerness of the Scythian monks to fight this heresy also in August 519, in the Preface to his translation into Latin of two letters (nos. 45 and 46) of Cyril of Alexandria, required by two of the Scythian monks come to Rome—Dionisius Exiguus, *Praefatio ad Ioannem et Leontium* 3, in *Scriptores Illyrici Minores*, p. 56^{29–34}.

37 On the *Henotikon* and the Acacian schism, see Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 2/1 (see above, n. 1), pp. 287–317.

38 See below, p. 311, the paragraph with n. 206.

form and making it useful not only against the Nestorians, but also against the extreme Miaphysites (Monophysites).

12.2 Dionysius Exiguus

Dionysius Exiguus was a remarkable theological personality, raised from among the Scythian monks by the turn of the 6th century. The main information about his life is found in the prefaces he wrote, which accompany his translations and works, as well as in the passage dedicated to him by Cassiodorus in *Institutiones divinarum et saecularium litterarum* (*Institutions of Divine and Secular Learning*) (1.23). In what follows, I present several biographical data in order to include Dionysius within the history of Istro-Pontic monasticism.³⁹ The main part of the exposition focuses on the presentation and analysis of the information referring to the situation of monasticism in Roman Scythia, provided by him in two of his prefaces.

39 Of these studies, we note: Viktor Schurr, *Die Trinitätslehre des Boethius im Lichte der "skytischen Kontroversen"*, (Forschungen zur christlichen Literatur und Dogmengeschichte) 18/1 (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1935), pp. 168–197; Wilhelm Maria Peitz, *Dionysius Exiguus Studien*, (Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte) 33 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1960); Charles Munier, "L'oeuvre canonique de Denys le Petit, d'après les travaux du R. P. Wilhelm Peitz, s.J.," *Sacris erudiri* 14 (1963), pp. 236–250; Hubert Wurm, *Studien und Texte zur Decretalensammlung des Dionysius Exiguus*, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam: Schippers, 1964); Aloisie-Ludovic Tăutu, *Dionisie Românul: o podoabă a Bisericii noastre strămoșești* [Dionysius the Romanian: An Ornament of Our Ancestral Church], 2nd ed. (Rome: Tipografia Poliglotă Gregoriană, 1967); M. Mähler, "Denis le Petit, traducteur de la Vie de saint Pachôme," in *La Vie latine de saint Pachôme traduite du grec par Denys le Petit*, ed. Henri Van Cranenburgh, (Subsidia Hagiographica) 46 (Brussels: Société des Bollandistes, 1969), pp. 28–48; Ioan G. Coman, *Scritori bisericești din epoca străromână* [Church Writers from the Proto-Romanian Era] (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1979), pp. 268–280; Nestor Vornicescu, *Primele scrieri patristice în literatura română: secolele IV–XVI* [The First Patristic Writings in Romanian Literature: 4th–16th Centuries] (Craiova: Editura Mitropoliei Olteniei, 1984), pp. 66–74; Gheorghe I. Drăgulin, *Sfântul Dionisie Smeritul și Areopagitul, părintele erei creștine: (†aprox. 555)* [Saint Dionysius the Humble and the Areopagite, the Father of the Christian Era (Anno Domini): (†c.555)] (Bucharest: Proxima, 2008); Nicolae Dură, "Denys Exiguus (465–550). Précisions et correctifs concernant sa vie et son oeuvre," *Revista española de derecho canónico Salamanca* 50 (1993), pp. 279–290; Florian Duță, "Des précisions sur la biographie de Denys le Petit," *Revue de droit canonique* 49 (1999), no. 1, pp. 279–296; Silviu-Constantin Nedelcu, "Copilăria, educația și formarea teologică a Sfântului Dionisie Exiguul" [The Childhood, Education, and Theological Formation of Saint Dionysius Exiguus], *Oltenia. Studii și Comunicări. Arheologie-Istorie* 24 (2017), pp. 251–259. Other studies will be mentioned in this subchapter.

As shown by one of these prefaces (see below), Dionysius Exiguus was born in Roman Scythia.⁴⁰ Based on this confession, Cassiodorus' words "*Dionysius monachus, Scythia natione*" can be interpreted as "Dionysius, originating from Scythia."⁴¹ His birth date is not known, but most of the scholars place it between the years 460 and 470.⁴² The middle of this decade (c.465) is in agreement with the main events of his life.

40 The only scholars who sustain another origin of Dionysius are Wilhelm Maria Peitz (*Dionysius Exiguus Studien*, p. 15) and Klaus Zelzer [*"Cassianus natione Scythia, ein Südgallier," Wiener Studien* 104 (1991), pp. 167–168]. The first one considers that Dionysius was from the South-Caucasian border of Pontus or from northern Armenia. He brought as argument the contacts that Dionysius had with his friends in Mabbug (now Manbij, Syria) during his stay in Rome. Zelzer [followed also by Marie-Anne Vannier, "Jean Cassien, Scythe ou Provençal?" in *Anthropos Laïkos. Mélanges Alexandre Faivre à l'occasion de ses 30 ans d'enseignement*, eds. Marie-Anne Vannier, Otto Wermelinger, and Gregor Wurst, (Paradosis. Études de littérature et de théologie anciennes) 44 (Fribourg: Éditions Universitaires, 2000), pp. 324–325] considers that Dionysius was coming from the region of Alexandria, in Egypt. From his point of view, by '*Scythia*' Cassiodorus meant the desert of Scetis. To support this origin, Zelzer invoked Dionysius' good knowledge of Greek and Latin languages, as well as the fact that he was well acquainted with the Alexandrian Church, whose date of Easter he promoted in Rome. It is surprising, though, that these scholars omitted Dionysius' words from the Preface to the Latin translation of letters 45 and 46 of Cyril of Alexandria (see below).

41 Cassiodorus, *Institutiones* 1.23.2, 2nd ed., ed. Roger A.B. Mynors (Oxford: Clarendon Pr., 1937), p. 62¹²; Cassiodorus, *Institutiones of Divine and Secular Learning and On the Soul*, trans. and notes James W. Halporn, introd. Mark Vessey, (Translated Texts for Historians) 42 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004), p. 154.

42 Year 460: Tăutu, *Dionisie Românul*, p. 8; Emilian Popescu, *Christianitas*, p. 212, no. 60. Year 465: Gheorghe I. Drăgulin and Augusta Drăgulin, "Cercetări asupra operei lui Dionisie Exiguul și îndeosebi asupra celei necunoscute până acum" [Research on the Work of Dionysius Exiguus and Especially on the Hitherto Unknown], *Mitropolia Olteniei* 40 (1988), no. 5, p. 24; Nicolae Dură, "Străromânul Dionisie Exiguul (465–545) și opera sa canonică. O evaluare canonică a contribuției sale la dezvoltarea Dreptului bisericesc" [The Proto-Romanian Dionysius Exiguus (465–545) and His Canonical Works. A Canonical Evaluation of His Contribution to the Development of Ecclesiastical Law], *Ortodoxia* 41 (1989), no. 4, p. 37. Years 460–470: Manfred Oppermann, *Das frühe Christentum an der Westküste des Schwarzen Meeres und im anschließenden Binnenland: historische und archäologische Zeugnisse*, (Schriften des Zentrums für Archäologie und Kulturgeschichte des Schwarzmeerraumes) 19 (Langenweißbach: Beier & Beran, 2010), pp. 41–42. Years 465–470: Florian Duță, "Des précisions," p. 289. Year 470: Vornicescu, *Primele scrieri patristice*, p. 66; Emilian Popescu, "Des moines scythes et l'Eglise de Rome aux v^e–vii^e siècles," in *Papauté, monachisme et théories politiques: Études d'histoire médiévale offertes à Marcel Pacaut*, eds. Pierre Guichard et al., (Collection d'histoire et d'archéologie médiévales) (Lyon: Presses universitaires de Lyon, 1994), p. 314; Oppermann, *Das frühe Christentum*, p. 42. Years 470–475: Ioan G. Coman, *Scriitori bisericești*, pp. 63 and 268.

According to his testimony, Dionysius lived among the monks in Scythia during his childhood. He was educated by one of them, a monk named Peter, who later became metropolitan of Tomi. Based on this information, the hypothesis that Dionysius was left an orphan as a child and was raised in one of the monasteries of the province gained ground.⁴³ The possibility that he may have been brought to the monastery by his parents could also be taken into account, this practice being attested in contemporary documents.⁴⁴ As a teenager, he may have adopted monastic life at the same coenobium where he had been raised.

After the apprenticeship as a monk at the monastery in Scythia, Dionysius left, it seems, to Constantinople.⁴⁵ The exact date and reason for this departure are not known. The possibility for him to have been about 20–25 years old at that time could be considered, which would correspond to the years 485–490.

43 Hubert Mordek, "Dionysius Exiguus," in *Lexikon des Mittelalters*, 3, ed. Robert-Henri Bautier (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1999), col. 1088; Gheorghe I. Drăgulin, "Ieromonahul Dionisie Smeritul «Exiguul» sau cel mic. Încercare de întregire bio-bibliografică" [Hieromonk Dionysius the Humble, «Exiguus» or the Little One. A Bio-Bibliographic Completion Attempt], *Studii Teologice* 37 (1985), nos. 7–8, p. 523; Gheorghe I. Drăgulin, "Prefețele cuviosului Dionisie Smeritul sau Exiguul la unele traduceri în limba latină" [The Prefaces of the Pious Dionysius the Humble or Exiguus in Some Latin Translations], *Mitropolia Olteniei* 38 (1986), no. 2, p. 78; Gheorghe I. Drăgulin, "Un fiu de mare faimă al Arhiepiscopiei Tomisului din veacul al VI-lea la Roma" [A Famous Son of the Archbishopric of Tomi in the 6th Century in Rome], *Glasul Bisericii* 45 (1986), no. 3, p. 63; Drăgulin and Drăgulin, "Cercetări asupra operei," p. 25.

44 See below, p. 290, n. 88.

45 Mordek, "Dionysius Exiguus," col. 1088; Drăgulin and Drăgulin, "Cercetări asupra operei," pp. 26–27; Duță, "Des précisions," p. 294; Mircea Păcurariu, *Dicționarul teologilor români* [A Dictionary of Romanian Theologians] (Bucharest: Univers Enciclopedic, 1996), p. 164; Nelu Zugravu, "Pour une prosopographie chrétienne du Bas-Danube (III^e–VII^e siècles)," *Peuce* [s.n.] 11 (2013), p. 300; Mircea Ielciu, "Teologi din Scythia Minor. Personalități teologice reprezentative" [Theologians from Scythia Minor. Representative Theological Personalities], in *Monahismul ortodox românesc: istorie, contribuții și repertoriizare*, 1, eds. Mircea Păcurariu and Nicolae Edroiu (Bucharest: Basilica, 2014), p. 334. Wilhelm Maria Peitz (*Dionysius Exiguus Studien*, p. 15), who sustains that Dionysius was from Pontus or Armenia, considers that he became monk and lived for a while at the monastery in Mabbug, before coming to Constantinople. Influenced by this opinion of Peitz, some of the scholars sustaining Dionysius' Scythic origin admitted his trip to the "East," before his arrival in Constantinople—see Coman, *Scriitori bisericești*, p. 268; Popescu, "Frühes mönchtum," p. 232; Nestor Vornicescu, "Scrieri patristice în Biserica Ortodoxă Română până în secolul XVII" [Patristic Writings in the Romanian Orthodox Church until the 17th Century], *Mitropolia Olteniei* 35 (1983), nos. 1–2, p. 72; Vornicescu, *Primele scrieri patristice*, p. 67; Drăgulin, "Ieromonahul Dionisie," p. 525; Drăgulin, "Un fiu de mare faimă," p. 64; Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române* [The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church], 1 (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1991), p. 153.

Wilhelm Maria Peitz proposed that Dionysius had been known in the imperial capital by the papal legate Dioscorus. The meeting of the two would suppose the attendance by Dionysius of the ecclesiastical diplomatic circles in Constantinople and, implicitly, an official status that he held there. In this case, it would not be excluded for him to have had the function of apocrisiarius of the metropolis of Tomi in the capital.⁴⁶ Another possibility would be for him to have been sent to Constantinople by Peter, his former teacher, become metropolitan, in order to complete his studies and especially to perfect his knowledge of the Greek language.⁴⁷ Peitz also supposes that the same Dioscorus was the one who recommended Dionysius in Rome as the right person to make the collection of canons wanted by Pope Gelasius I.⁴⁸ Dionysius eventually left for Rome, at approximately 30 years of age, due to his good knowledge of Greek and Latin. Even if Pope Gelasius was no longer alive when he arrived there (the end of the year 496),⁴⁹ he remained in Rome, carrying out his activity under four Roman pontiffs. He had at his disposal the whole papal archive all this time, which he reorganized and used while writing his works.⁵⁰

The date of Dionysius' death is not known, either. The last years with preserved proof of his activity are 525–527. If the approximation of his date of birth is correct, he was about 60–62 years old at that time. He may have lived 2–3 more years, which would place his death around the year 530, at the age of approximately 65 years.⁵¹

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- 46 The existence in Constantinople of an apocrisiarius of the Church in Roman Scythia is attested through documents in the time of Metropolitan Valentinian of Tomi (c.550)—see Emilian Popescu, “L'Église de Tomis au temps du métropolitain Valentinien. L'ambassade (l'apocrisiariat) de Constantinople,” *Dacia* [n.s.] 51 (2007), pp. 251–255.
- 47 The perfection of his knowledge of Greek in Constantinople is considered also by Wilhelm Maria Peitz (*Dionysius Exiguus Studien*, p. 15). On the use of the Greek and Latin languages in Scythia at that time, see also below, subchapter 12.3.4: ‘The doctrine of salvation of the Scythian monks.’
- 48 Wilhelm Maria Peitz (*Dionysius Exiguus Studien*, p. 20) states that in 514, when Hormisdas became pope, Dionysius took over from him the functions of head of Saint Anastasia monastery and of the papal chancellery. This idea is rejected by M. Mähler (“Denis le Petit,” p. 30) and G. Declercq [“Dionysius Exiguus and the Introduction of the Christian Era,” *Sacris Erudiri* 41 (2002), p. 188]. According to Hubert Mordek (“Dionysius Exiguus,” col. 1088), Dionysius' rank of presbyter or abba is uncertain.
- 49 Dionysius Exiguus, *Praefatio ad Iulianum presbyterum* 3, in *Scriptores Illyrici Minores*, p. 45^{21–22}.
- 50 Peitz, *Dionysius Exiguus Studien*, pp. 14–17 and 20.
- 51 Similarly, Peitz, *Dionysius Exiguus Studien*, p. 42; Louis Duchesne, *L'Église au VI^e siècle* (Paris: De Boccard, Paris, 1925), p. 142. According to other scholars, his death occurred later, in the period between 540 and 550/556—see Tăutu, *Dionisie Românul*, pp. 8 and 23; Ioan G. Coman, “Scriitori teologi în Scythia Minor” [Theologian Writers in Scythia Minor], in *De la Dunăre la Mare. Mărturi istorice și monumente de artă creștină*, eds. Antim Nica

Some scholars supposed that Dionysius spent the last years of his life at the monastery school of Vivarium in Calabria (Italy), where he taught dialectic together with Cassiodorus. Two phrases from the paragraph dedicated to Dionysius by Cassiodorus in *Institutions* have been invoked in favour of this hypothesis. In one of them, Cassiodorus mentions that he used to pray with Dionysius: “*nobiscum orare consueverat*” (“he was accustomed to pray with us”).⁵² Nevertheless, this mention is (rightly) considered as insufficient to permit drawing the conclusion that the two of them had lived together at Vivarium.⁵³ The second phrase used in favour of Dionysius’ presence at the monastery in Calabria raised interpretation problems: “*qui mecum dialecticam legit*” (“he [i.e., Dionysius] read dialectic with me [i.e., Cassiodorus]”).⁵⁴ According to one of the interpretations, Cassiodorus would have had in mind his and Dionysius’ teachings of dialectics at Vivarium.⁵⁵ However, this interpretation is excluded by other aspects. Analyzing Cassiodorus’ phrase in *Institutions*, one can notice that he used the verb ‘*lego, legi*’ with the meaning ‘to read’ (considered by him as the first phase in a pupil’s process of study), and not that of ‘to teach others.’⁵⁶ For the last-mentioned meaning, Cassiodorus

et al. (Galați: Editura Arhiepiscopiei Tomisului și Dunării de Jos, 1979), p. 70; Vornicescu, “Scrieri patristice,” p. 72; Drăgulin, “Ieromonahul Dionisie,” p. 521; Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii*, p. 153; Popescu, “Des moines,” p. 314; Mordek, “Dionysius Exiguus,” col. 1088; Ielciu, “Teologi din Scythia,” p. 334.

52 Cassiodorus, *Institutiones* 1.23.2, p. 62²⁵; trans., p. 155.

53 Mähler, “Denis le Petit,” p. 30. According to Hubert Mordek (“Dionysius Exiguus,” col. 1088), Dionysius’ presence at Vivarium is uncertain.

54 Cassiodorus, *Institutiones* 1.23.2, p. 62¹⁷⁻¹⁸; trans., p. 155.

55 In favour of Dionysius’ presence at Vivarium are: Friedrich Maassen, *Geschichte der Quellen und der Literatur des canonischen Rechts*, 1 (Gratz: Leuschner & Lubensky, 1870), p. 422; A. Van de Vyver, “Cassiodore et son oeuvre,” *Speculum* 6 (1931), no. 2, p. 262; A. Van de Vyver, “Les Institutiones de Cassiodore et sa fondation à Vivarium,” *Revue bénédictine* 53 (1941), p. 77; Jacqueline Rambaud-Buhot, “Denis le Petit,” *Dictionnaire de droit canonique*, 4/1, ed. Raoul Naz (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1949), col. 1134; Tăutu, *Dionisie Românul*, pp. 9 and 23; Coman, “Scriitori teologi,” p. 70; Ștefan Alexe, “Introducere” [Introduction], in Casiodor, *Istoria bisericească tripartită* [Cassiodorus, *Tripartite History*], trans. Liana Manolache and Anca Manolache, (Părinți și scriitori bisericești) 75 (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1998), p. 12; Ielciu, “Teologi din Scythia,” p. 334.

56 See for exemple Cassiodorus, *Institutiones* 1.23.2, p. 63³⁻⁵; trans., p. 155: “*Hos etiam oportet vos assidue legere, ne videamini tam salutare ecclesiasticas regulas culpabiliter ignorare*” (“You ought to read them [i.e., the texts of the ecclesiastical canons] eagerly so that you do not remain through your own fault ignorant of the salutary rules of the Church”), and also Praef.7, p. 6²³⁻²⁵; trans., p. 108: “*legite precor assidue, recurrite diligenter; mater est enim intelligentiae frequens et intenta meditatio*.” (“read, I pray, constantly; go over the material diligently; for frequent and intense meditation is the mother of understanding.”).

used the verb *'erudio, -ivi'*.⁵⁷ Secondly, one must also take into account that Vivarium monastery was founded by Cassiodorus after 537 (when he concluded his political career in Ravenna), probably around the year 540.⁵⁸ At that time, Dionysius would have been about 75 years old, which would be quite an advanced age.⁵⁹ Thirdly, if this hypothesis were accepted, it would be difficult to explain why Dionysius had stopped his activity for more than a decade: between 527 (when the last mention of his activity in Rome appears) and 540 (when he could have started his teaching activity at Vivarium). This fact would be something totally unusual for an active person like him.⁶⁰ According to another interpretation, Cassiodorus may have had in mind the dialectics courses that he received, together with Dionysius, from Peter, who later became bishop. In such a case, the latter would no longer be metropolitan of Tomi, but a hierarch in Italy (Rome or Calabria).⁶¹ Nevertheless, such an interpretation is contradicted by the fact that Dionysius spent his childhood and, implicitly, was educated in Roman Scythia, and not in Italy. Moreover, the age difference between Dionysius and Cassiodorus (born c.385) was of approximately 20 years, which excludes the possibility for the two of them to have been schoolmates.⁶² According to a third interpretation, Cassiodorus had Dionysius as a teacher in the reading of dialectic texts.⁶³ To clarify this idea, it must be considered that at that time, the texts of many books were devoid of punctuation and in some of them the words were not separated, which

57 See Cassiodorus, *Institutiones* Praef.7, p. 7⁷⁻¹⁰; trans., p. 108: "*famulum barbarum litteris imperitum orationibus crebris ita sibi traditum codicem subito legisse, quasi in schola fuerit longis meditationibus eruditus.*" ("a barbarian servant, unacquainted with letters, by frequent prayers, had suddenly read the codex handed down to him, as if he had been learned by long meditations at school.").

58 See Van de Vyver, "Cassiodore et son oeuvre," p. 271; Van de Vyver, "Les Institutiones," p. 85.

59 Similarly, Peitz, *Dionysius Exiguus Studien*, p. 42.

60 See Peitz, *Dionysius Exiguus Studien*, p. 42.

61 Jean Baptiste François Pitra, *Analecta novissima spicilegii solesmensis, altera continuatio*, 1 (Paris: Roger et Chernowitz Bibliopolis, 1885), p. 36; Erich Caspar, *Geschichte des Papsttums von den Anfängen bis zur Höhe der Weltherrschaft*, 2 (Tübingen: Mohr, 1933), pp. 311–312.

62 Cassiodorus' birth is dated around the year 385 (Mark Vessey, "Introduction," in Cassiodorus, *Institutions*, p. 3) or around 390 [Michael Frassetto, *Encyclopedia of Barbarian Europe: Society in Transformation* (Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO, 2003), p. 103]. The first year seems more likely, as in 505–506 Cassiodorus was appointed *quaestor sacri palatii*, after a famous speech delivered in honor of king Theodoric the Great of the Ostrogoths (see Mähler, "Denis le Petit," pp. 29–30).

63 Mähler, "Denis le Petit," pp. 29–30.

rendered their understanding difficult for the unexperienced.⁶⁴ Therefore, it is possible that scholar Dionysius may have fulfilled the role of a grammarian (*grammaticus*), guiding the young Cassiodorus in reading books of dialectics. In this case, the meaning of Cassiodorus' phrase would be: "he guided me into reading books of dialectic." This interpretation goes both with the age and formation difference between the two and with the meaning of the verb '*lego*' in Cassiodorus' wording. Cassiodorus' guiding by Dionysius could have taken place shortly after Dionysius' arrival in Rome (the end of the year 496), when the first one was about 10 years old. Therefore, the presence of Dionysius at Vivarium monastery finds no real support in any of the two phrases invoked in favour of this hypothesis.

Cassiodorus provides also a moral and intellectual portrait of Dionysius. He points to the fact that Dionysius was very skilled in Greek and Latin, knew very well the Holy Bible and was "strictly orthodox and completely and always attached to the regulations of old," that he dedicated himself totally to God, being chaste, gentle, and very temperate, and that: "there was great simplicity joined with wisdom, humility with learning, and brevity in his [Dionysius'] eloquence."⁶⁵

Dionysius' activity in Rome was a complex one: canonist, computist, theologian, philosopher, hagiographer, and, according to the interpretation above, even private tutor for youth. He also supported the proceedings of his fellow-monks in Scythia, who promoted the theoanthropopaschite theological formula.⁶⁶ In 497, shortly after his arrival in Rome, Dionysius translated into Latin the Third Letter to Nestorius (no. 17 or the Synodal Letter) (containing the Twelve Chapters), written by Cyril of Alexandria and the synod assembled in Alexandria in 430. The translation had been required by Metropolitan Peter of Tomi. In July 519, a delegation of Scythian monks arrived in Rome, wanting to obtain the approval of their theological formula by Pope Hormisdas. On that occasion, they also met Dionysius, whom they asked to translate into Latin for them two Letters (nos. 45 and 46) of Cyril of Alexandria addressed to Succe(n)ssus of Diocaesarea in Isauria. In the final part of the preface preceding the text of the translation, Dionysius promised to try to translate also other works of Cyril of Alexandria for them.⁶⁷ Even if no other translation is known

64 See, in this respect, the details provided by Cassiodorus in *Institutiones* (Praef.9, pp. 8–9; trans., pp. 109–110) and the explanations of James W. Halporn in notes 8 and 10 (p. 109).

65 Cassiodorus, *Institutiones* 1.23.2–3, pp. 62–63; trans., pp. 154–155.

66 See below, subchapter 12.3: 'The Scythian monks.'

67 Dionysius Exiguus, *Praefatio ad Ioannem et Leontium* 3, p. 56^{39–43}.

to have been addressed to them,⁶⁸ the quotations used by his fellow-Scythians arrived in Rome, in the letter addressed to the African bishops exiled in Sardinia, include also passages of pseudo-Celestine Capitula, preserved until present by means of *Collectio Dionysiana*.⁶⁹ This proves the extensive support Dionysius provided to his fellow-countrymen arrived in Rome.

Excerpts from the Twelve Chapters against Nestorius were quoted also by John Maxentius in his work *Little Book of Faith*, but in a revised form. Eduard Schwartz considered first that the revising of the translation was done also by Dionysius.⁷⁰ This would mean that he also had other relations with theologians of his native province between 497 (when he wrote to Peter) and 519 (when Maxentius made public *Little Book of Faith* in Constantinople). Later, Schwartz, without totally rejecting the first hypothesis, considered the possibility for the translation revision of the Synodal Letter (containing the Twelve Chapters) to have been done by John Maxentius himself.⁷¹ This second hypothesis seems more probable, as the Scythian monks arrived in Rome in 519 used the Latin text of the Twelve Chapters of Cyril following Dionysius' initial translation, and not the revised form used by Maxentius.⁷² Had Dionysius carried out the revision, it would have been natural for him to provide it also to his fellow-countrymen arrived in Rome. Nevertheless, even so, all these show that Metropolitan Peter provided John Maxentius with Dionysius' initial translation, which suggests a close collaboration between the two of them. After several years, John Maxentius and his monks came into conflict with Metropolitan Paternus (Peter's successor to the see of Tomi) and with the other bishops in Scythia, as these bishops refused to accept the theanthropopaschite formula. This suggests that Paternus, unlike Peter, did not come from among Scythian monks.

Dionysius Exiguus is the second great representative of monasticism in Roman Scythia settled outside the borders of the province, after John Cassian.

68 See Eduard Schwartz, "Praefatio," in *ACO*, IV/2, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1914), pp. xvii–xviii; Mähler, "Denis le Petit," pp. 32–37.

69 See Petrus Diaconus et al., *Epistula ad episcopos*, in *Maxentii aliorumque scytharum monachorum*, pp. 165 and 170–172. On pseudo-Celestine Capitula in *Collectio Dionysiana*, see Rambaud-Buhot, "Denys le Petit," col. 1146.

70 Eduard Schwartz, *I. Die sogenannten Gegenanathematismen des Nestorius. II. Zur Schriftstellerei Theodoret's*, (Sitzungsberichte der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften. Philosophisch-philologische und historische Klasse) 1 (Munich: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1922), p. 21.

71 Eduard Schwartz, "Praefatio," in *ACO*, I/5.2, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1924–1926), p. viii.

72 See Schurr, *Die Trinitätslehre*, p. 175, n. 235.

At the same time, he may be considered one of the most important Scythian monks by the turn of the 6th century.

12.2.1 *The Preface to the Latin Translation of Cyril of Alexandria's Letters (Nos. 45 and 46) to Succe(n)ssus*

As already mentioned, information about monasticism in Roman Scythia can be found in two of Dionysius Exiguus' prefaces, which precede his translations. They are the Preface to the Latin translation of Letters 45 and 46 of Cyril of Alexandria and the Preface to the translation of the Synodal Letter of 430. The description of monastic life in Scythia exposed in these Prefaces reflects the situation approximately from the period of the years 470–485, when Dionysius was in the province and was mature enough to analyze the way of living of the monks he met.

The preface to the translation of Cyril's Letters to Succe(n)ssus was written in 519 (most probably in August), shortly after the arrival of the delegation of Scythian monks in Rome.⁷³ It had been required by these monks, who wished to use it in defense of their theanthropopaschite formula. John and Leontius, two of the delegation members, attested also in other documents (see below), are indicated as its addressees. In the Preface, Dionysius refers to the Scythian monks' virtues, profound preoccupations, and strong theological formation. These appreciations were meant to support his fellow-countrymen's efforts, guaranteeing the orthodoxy of their preaching. Dionysius also mentioned that the information he provided is based on his personal experience, as one originating from that place. This specification represents a strong argument in favour of his Istro-Pontic origin:

It may seem strange to the ignorant that Scythia, which is proved to be terrible both for its cold and its barbarians, has always produced men burning with heat and admirable in the placidity of their manners; that it is so, we know it not only through a certain knowledge due to our birth, but also through the teaching of experience; since there, with the grace of God, in an exposed terrestrial community, we have reborn by the sacrament of baptism and have been worthy to contemplate the heavenly life in the fragile body of certain blessed fathers, who made that region distinguish itself by its spiritual fertility. Their faith, that bright by its

⁷³ Schwartz, *Die sogenannten*, p. 21; Viktor Schurr, *Die Trinitätslehre des Boethius im Lichte der "skytischen Kontroversen"*, (Forschungen zur christlichen Literatur und Dogmengeschichte) 18/1 (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1935), pp. 170 and 180; Duță, "Des pré-cisions," p. 294.

relation with their deeds, offered everyone models both of life and faith; being free of any worldly concerns, they can say with the apostle: 'our citizenship is in heaven' [Phil. 3:20]; among them, dogmas of the Catholic faith always grew vigorous, as, even if simple by their words, they were not ignorant in science.⁷⁴

These "blessed fathers," Dionysius referred to are most probably the monks he met during his childhood and adolescence. Even if their description is exposed in an idealized way, it contributes to the identification of their main preoccupations: asceticism and theological study. The first one is indicated by the words "the heavenly life in the fragile body" ("*caelestem conuersationem in carne fragili*"). Their efforts (physical and probably charitable actions) are considered also by the words "their faith, that bright by its relation with their deeds" ("*quorum fides, operis conexatione resplendens*"). The preoccupation with theological study and the zeal in defending the Catholic faith are indicated by the words "among them, dogmas of the Catholic faith always grew vigorous, as ... they were not ignorant in science" ("*penes quos etiam catholicae fidei dogmata semper intemerata uiguere; nam ... imperiti scientia non fuerunt*"). The words "being free of any worldly concerns" ("*nullius prorsus mundanae sollicitudinis nexibus inuoluti*") showed that the monks the Dionysius referred to were leading a coenobitic way of life.

The special living of these monks took place in unfavourable climatic and security conditions. Dionysius himself mentioned that "Scythia ... is proved to be terrible both for its cold and its barbarians" ("*Scythia frigoribus simul et barbaris probatur esse terribilis*"). The second aspect of the assertion is also confirmed by the results of archaeological investigations, which revealed the intensification of the attacks and robberies barbarian populations provoked in the province during the third quarter of the 5th century.⁷⁵ Nevertheless, these regional problems did not affect (according to Dionysius' testimony) the evolution of local monastic life. Besides, his statements are confirmed both by archaeological discoveries and by the case of the Scythian monks actively involved in the theological debates of the empire.

Moreover, the appreciation "Scythia ... has always produced men burning with heat and admirable in the placidity of their manners" ("*Scythia ... uiros semper eduxerit calore feruentes et morum placiditate mirabiles*") is worthy of note. It reveals that, at that time, the "spiritual fertility" ("*spirituali fertilitate*") of the province was seen by its inhabitants as the result of a long monastic

74 Dionysius Exiguus, *Praefatio ad Ioannem et Leontium* 1–2, p. 55^{3–19}.

75 See above, 'Introduction.'

tradition, and not as a temporary exception. Dionysius reinforced this statement with the words “that it is so, we know it not only through a certain knowledge due to our birth, but also through the teaching of experience” (“*nobis hoc ita esse non solum natiua quadam notitia, uerum etiam experientia magistra compertum est*”). These appreciations demonstrate that both the spiritual experience of the forefathers in the Scythian monasteries and the memory the greatest local monastic personalities of the past were transmitted from generation to generation. The idea of perpetuating the latter’s laudable image among the new generations is confirmed by the case of Theotimus I, the monk metropolitan of Tomi. As already shown, his memory was still alive at almost half a century from his death, even outside the borders of the province.

Dionysius’ words regarding the theological preoccupations of the Scythian monks and the pure faith confessed and defended by them show that the monasteries of the province were real theological centres at that time, where teaching and understanding the doctrine of faith represented a priority. The awareness of their good knowledge of the Catholic doctrine incited the monks there to be firm in theological debates. Moreover, even at that time, Scythian monks were actively involved in the effort of defending the Catholic faith, being convinced that there is no compromise in matters of faith and that the deviation from the right faith results in the loss of the heavenly goods.

Despite this idyllic picture, the reality was different, however. As will be shown in one of the following subchapters, even if the Scythian monks’ Christological teaching was absolutely Orthodox, the soteriological one (closely related to living) was wrong.⁷⁶

12.2.2 *The Preface to the Latin Translation of the Synodal Letter (No. 17) to Nestorius*

There is no consensus among scholars on the dating of this translation and, implicitly, of the Preface that preceded it. Some have dated it to the year 497, shortly after Dionysius settled in Rome (496), others to 518 or 519, during the debates regarding the theanthroposchite formula.⁷⁷ According to a third

76 See below, subchapter 12.3.4: ‘The doctrine of salvation of the Scythian monks.’

77 In 497: Schwartz, “Praefatio,” in *ACO*, 1/5.2, p. v; Popescu, *Christianitas*, pp. 212 (n. 60) and 214; Nelu Zugravu, “Studiu introductiv, notițe bibliografice, note și comentarii” [Introductory Study, Biobibliographical Notes, Footnotes, and Comments], in Nelu Zugravu (ed.), *Fontes Historiae Daco-Romanae Christianitatis* (Iași: Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza,” 2008), pp. 86, 95, and 515 (n. 2). After 498: Oppermann, *Das frühe Christentum*, p. 42. In 518–519: Schurr, *Die Trinitätslehre*, pp. 171–180; William Carroll Bark, “John Maxentius and the Collectio Palatina,” *Harvard Theological Review* 36 (1943), no. 2, p. 95; Aloys Grillmeier, “Vorbereitung des Mittelalters. Studie über das Verhältnis von

opinion, it had been made at the beginning of the 6th century, but with several years before 519, immediately after the beginning of the debates concerning the theoanthropaschite formula in Scythia.⁷⁸

As regards the addressee of the Preface, he is a certain “most blessed lord father, Bishop Peter” (*Domino beatissimo patri Petro episcopo*).⁷⁹ The identification of Peter’s episcopal see is also a subject of debate. Several scholars have stated that Peter was a bishop in Scythia, either in Tomi, as a predecessor of Paternus, or in one of the other episcopal centres of the province, suffragan of the metropolis of Tomi.⁸⁰ Others considered that Peter was a bishop outside Scythia, either in the Italian Peninsula, or in Thrace, Moesia or in another episcopal centre situated in the north-eastern region of the Balkan Peninsula.⁸¹

From our point of view, the correct hypothesis of all these is the one stating that Peter was bishop of Tomi at the end of the 5th century (c.480–498). His spiritual leadership in Scythia finds support in Dionysius’ assertions that Peter was the one who guided him during his childhood, which was spent (as shown by the Preface previously analysed) in the Istro-Pontic province. This leads to the conclusion that, at that time, the future hierarch was one of the monks in the Scythian monastery with whom Dionysius grew up. It is unlikely for Peter, a monk in Scythia, to have become bishop of another province in the north-eastern part of the Balkan Peninsula. Besides, such a hypothesis is not supported by any argument. Victor Schurr had to propose it as he dated the translation of the Synodal Letter by Dionysius and the Preface preceding it in the years 518–519, when Paternus was a metropolitan in Tomi (498–520). On the other hand, given the fact that the suffragan sees on the territory of Roman Scythia were founded in 536, Peter could be only a metropolitan of Tomi (Paternus’ predecessor), and not one of the suffragan bishops in the

Chalkedonismus und Neu-Chalkedonismus in der lateinischen Theologie von Boethius bis zu Gregor dem Grossen,” in *Das Konzil von Chalkedon: Geschichte und Gegenwart. Entscheidung um Chalkedon*, 2, eds. Aloys Grillmeier and Heinrich Bacht (Würzburg: Echter-Verlag, 1954), p. 798, n. 7; Mähler, “Denis le Petit,” pp. 34–35.

78 Duță, “Des précisions,” pp. 289–290.

79 Dionysius Exiguus, *Praefatio ad Petrum episcopum* 1, p. 59¹.

80 Bishop of Tomi: Schwartz, “Praefatio,” in *ACO*, I/5,2, p. V; Popescu, *Christianitas*, pp. 212 (n. 60) and 214; Zugravu, “Studiu introductiv,” p. 86 (n. 541); Zugravu, “Pour une prosopographie,” p. 300; Duță, “Des précisions,” p. 289 (as a second possibility); Moreau, “Les moines scythes (see above, n. 34), p. 201. Ordinary bishop in another city of Scythia: Duță, “Des précisions,” pp. 288–289 (as a first possibility); Oppermann, *Das frühe Christentum*, p. 42.

81 The Italian Peninsula: Pitra, *Analecta novissima*, p. 36. North-eastern part of the Balkan Peninsula: Schurr, *Die Trinitätslehre*, p. 178.

province.⁸² Paternus is first attested as a metropolitan in 498.⁸³ In this case, the translation of the Synodal Letter and the preface preceding it were made between the end of the year 496 (when Dionysius arrived in Rome) and 498 (when Paternus is attested in Tomi).

Important for the current topic is the first part of this Preface, in particular, where Dionysius expressed his gratitude toward Bishop Peter, his former guide and teacher from his childhood years. In this excerpt, Dionysius asserts:

Remembering your benefactions, venerable father and eminent glory of the bishops of Christ, always having in front of my mind's eyes the holy teachings that you bestowed me as guidance when I was a child (*paruulo*)—and no distance or time can erase them—, I want in turn to offer you my gratitude, which will never be enough, I know. But as our wish is faster than our deeds, I keep expressing, as zealous as I can be, the longing I always feel for your holiness.⁸⁴

The passage shows that Metropolitan Peter of Tomi was the one who took care of Dionysius' education during his childhood. The place where the two of them spent that period must have been one of the monasteries in Scythia. This interpretation finds support in Dionysius' words from the Preface previously analyzed, which shows that he knew directly the life of the monks in Scythia. Peter was most probably one of the monks of the monastery where Dionysius spent his childhood. He later became metropolitan of Tomi. The gratitude shown by Dionysius to his former teacher, as well as the relation of sincere love that he had with him suggest a quite long period spent by the two of them together and the attention that Dionysius received from the future hierarch. Several scholars supposed that Peter was the leader of that monastery at that time.⁸⁵ Nevertheless, he seems to have been, most probably, one of its most educated and virtuous monks. An argument in favour of this assertion is the principle established by Basil the Great, which states that the children's education must be dealt with by one of the older monks (but not the hegumen),

82 On the dating of suffragan bishoprics establishment in Roman Scythia, see above, chapter 3: 'The ordinary bishoprics on the territory of the Roman province of Scythia.'

83 Ion Barnea, "Note de epigrafiie romano-bizantină" [Notes of Late Roman Epigraphy], *Pontica* 10 (1977), p. 276.

84 Dionysius Exiguus, *Praefatio ad Petrum episcopum* 1, p. 59³⁻¹¹.

85 Drăgulin, "Prefețele cuviosului Dionisie," p. 78; Drăgulin, "Un fiu de mare faimă," p. 64; Drăgulin, "Ieromonahul Dionisie," p. 523; Drăgulin and Drăgulin, "Cercetări asupra operei," p. 25.

who must be experienced, gentle, and wise.⁸⁶ Starting from these details, from the year when Peter ended his episcopal mission in Tomi (497 or 498, at most) and the approximate year of Dionysius' birth (c.465), we can make a chronological evaluation of Peter's life: born approximately in 430, around the First Council of Ephesus (431); he became a monk at approximately 15–20 years old (445–450), around the Council of Chalcedon (451); educator (at 40–45/50 years old) of Dionysius, when the latter was 5–10/15 years old (470–475/480); he then became metropolitan of Tomi at approximately 50 years old (c.480), around the issue of *Henotikon* (482) by Emperor Zeno (474–491); finally, he died in 497/498, at approximately 67/68 years old.

Peter is the second hierarch of Tomi (after Theotimus 1) known to have come from among the local monks.⁸⁷ Indirectly, this confirms the fame of the monks from there within the Church of Scythia in the last quarter of the 5th century.

The fact that the young Dionysius and, most probably, other children, were received in the monastery and entrusted to the experienced monks' care prove the good organization that existed in the second half of the 5th century in the monasteries in Scythia. This shows that every activity within the monasteries was carried out following clear rule, which favoured the well-ordered life and the theological study, mentioned by Dionysius Exiguus. This also shows the monks' active involvement in philanthropical activities organized in the province at that time. It is supposed that, beside housing and raising children that were orphan or entrusted by their own parents for their proper education (accepted by Basil the Great),⁸⁸ the monks also actively supported the other disadvantaged classes (old people, widows, poor families) and, most probably, were actively involved in preaching the Catholic faith.

86 Basilius Magnus, *Regulae fusius tractatae* 15.2, PG 31:953; Anna M. Silvas, *The Asketikon of Saint Basil the Great* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 202: "Let someone [i.e., monk] of mature years be put in charge of them [i.e., children], one more experienced than the others, who gives evidence of patience. Thus he will be able to correct the sins of the young with fatherly compassion and with the skilful word, assigning suitable remedies for each offence, such that the soul receives at the same time both a penalty for the sin and an exercise in calming itself."

87 On Theotimus 1, see above, subchapter 11.4: 'Saint Theotimus 1 of Tomi (c.390–c.407).'

88 Basilius Magnus, *Regulae fusius tractatae* 15.1, PG 31:952; trans., p. 200: "Children bereft of parents we take in of our own accord, thus becoming fathers of orphans after the example of Job's zeal [cf. Job 29:12]. But children who are under their parents' authority and are brought by them in person we receive before several witnesses, so as to give no pretext to those on the look-out for one, and to stop every unjust mouth uttering blasphemy against us."

The Preface addressed to Bishop Peter, which may be regarded also as a response to the letter by which the bishop asked for the respective translation from him, reveals that Dionysius Exiguus maintained contact with his native province. The cordial relations maintained by the two of them prove that Dionysius left his native province and settled in Rome with the consent of his superiors in Scythia.

In the Preface sent to Bishop Peter, Dionysius also mentioned the name of a certain brother Sanctulus: “[the translation of the Synodal Letter] I sent it to you by brother Sanctulus, your admirer” (*“per ueneratorem uestrum fratrem Sanctulum destinauit”*).⁸⁹ He was most probably also a monk, fact suggested by the use by Dionysius of the appellation ‘brother’ (*‘frater’*) when he mentioned his name. Moreover, it is unlikely that this Sanctulus may have been a deacon or a priest. In such a case, it would have been expected that Dionysius should have mentioned his rank within the Church. Nelu Zugravu considers the possibility that Sanctulus may have been apocrisarius of the Tomitan metropolitan by the Roman see.⁹⁰ Nevertheless, more probable is the hypothesis that he was the one who had received the mission of transmitting to Dionysius Metropolitan Peter’s request and who later brought the translation text to Scythia.⁹¹ In this case, his coming and stay in Rome were occasional, not long. It is not excluded that through the mediation of this Sanctulus, Dionysius may have transmitted to Peter also information about the theological negotiations between Rome, Alexandria, and Constantinople at that time.

The data gathered from the two Prefaces of Dionysius Exiguus reveal the theological preoccupations and the ascetic life of the Scythian monks in the 470s and 480s. Neither barbarian invasions, nor the tough climate of the province affected the intensity of monastic life there, which was governed, most probably, according to the rule of Basil the Great.⁹² The same information also shows the preoccupation of Metropolitan Peter of Tomi with the theological debates of the empire. He may have been directly involved in the conception of the theanthropopaschite theological formula. Shortly after his death, the young monks from this place, some of them possibly former students of his, got directly involved in its promotion and recognition by the whole Church.

The request Metropolitan Peter addressed to Dionysius to translate a theological study from Greek into Latin and, later, the similar demand of the

89 Dionysius Exiguus, *Praefatio ad Petrum episcopum* 1, p. 59¹⁷⁻¹⁸.

90 Zugravu, “Studiu introductiv,” p. 95.

91 Dominic Moreau (“Les moines scythes,” p. 201) also considers that Sanctulus was, most probably, a Scythian monk.

92 See below, subchapter 12.4: ‘The internal organization of Scythian monasteries.’

Scythian monks arrived in Rome, prove that many of the Scythian theologians of the time did not know the Greek language very well.

12.3 The Scythian Monks

12.3.1 *The Involvement of the Scythian Monks in the Theological Debates of the 5th–6th Centuries*

Most of the information on monasticism in Roman Scythia in the first half of the 6th century is related to Scythian monks.⁹³ They distinguished themselves both in the East and in the West as a result of their active involvement in contemporary theological debates. They are first remembered for the theoanthropaschite theological formula—“One of the Holy Trinity suffered/was crucified in the flesh” (“*unus de sancta trinitate passus/crucifixus est carne*”)—that they promoted.⁹⁴ Through this, they aimed at eliminating the Nestorian or Monophysite type of interpretations of the Christological teaching.

The first phase of the theological debates to which the Scythian monks participate took place during the reign of Anastasius I. The revolt of the military commander Vitalian in the years 513–518 was also marked by the latter’s effort to fight Monophysitism, sustained by the emperor. By two letters [of 28 December 514 (*Ep.* 109) and 12 January 515 *Ep.* (107)] addressed to Pope Hormisdas, Anastasius I informed the Roman pontiff on the troubles “occurring in our area under religious pretexts,”⁹⁵ inviting him to be a mediator in solving them.⁹⁶ Under the military pressure exerted by Vitalian, the emperor also called a council, scheduled to take place in the city of Heraclea in Thrace, in July of 515. In his correspondence, he invoked the same reason to justify this

93 As already shown at the beginning of the second part of the present book (chapter 7: ‘Studies on monasticism in Roman Scythia’), the studies dedicated to Scythian monks are numerous. The most important are mentioned in the following pages, according to the information presented in their content.

94 The Scythian monks’ formula is designated as “theopaschite” in most of the studies. Florea Duță [“Une rectification terminologique (la formule *theoanthropopaschite* ou *theosarkopaschite* et non *theopaschite*) et une distinction entre *theoanthropopaschitisme* et *theopaschitisme*,” *Theologia. Examēniaion epistēmonikon periodikon* 71 (2000), no. 2, pp. 495–505] is the one who defined it as theoanthropaschite, a term that correctly reflects its theological meaning. On this issue, see also John Anthony McGuckin, “The ‘Theopaschite Confession’ (Text and Historical Context): A Study in the Cyrilline Re-interpretation of Chalcedon,” *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 35 (1984), no. 2, p. 239.

95 *Epistula* 107, in *Avell. Coll.*, 2, p. 499^{16–17}. “*quae apud nos sub religionis specie commouentur.*”

96 *Epistula* 109, in *Avell. Coll.*, 2, p. 500^{1–3}.

council: “because, as it seems, certain doubts were expressed on the orthodox faith in the regions of Scythia.”⁹⁷

The planned council did no longer take place, as Vitalian, who forced its calling, was defeated by the troops of Anastasius I.⁹⁸ Subsequently, the latter's death in 518, as well as the accession of Justin I (518–527), a supporter of the Orthodox faith, to the throne of Constantinople, led to the end of Vitalian's revolt.

Scythian monks are not mentioned in the documents referring to this first phase of the theological disputes. Nevertheless, considering Vitalian's religious type of claims, his kinship with some of the monks,⁹⁹ as well as the latter's concern with defending the Orthodox faith, their direct involvement in the revolt is plausible.¹⁰⁰ Besides, in the second phase of the theological disputes, Vitalian unconditionally supported the Scythian monks' point of view, which proves the full confidence that he placed in them in matters of faith.¹⁰¹ All this evidence reveals the common opinions shared by Vitalian and the monks in theological issues and, implicitly, their relations since the first phase of the conflict.

Regarding the monks' role during the revolt against Anastasius I, it must have been that of Vitalian's advisers in theological issues. Most probably the accusations in matters of faith brought against the emperor were reported and

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- 97 *Epistula* 109, in *Avell. Coll.*, 2, p. 502¹⁻²: “*quia igitur dubitationes quaedam de orthodoxa religione in Scythiae partibus uidentur esse commotae.*”
- 98 Ion Barnea, “Perioada Dominatului” [The Dominate], in Radu Vulpe and Ion Barnea, *Din istoria Dobrogei* [A History of Dobruja], 2 (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1968), p. 414; Dan Ruscu, “The Revolt of Vitalianus and the ‘Scythian Controversy,’” *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 101 (2009), no. 2, p. 779.
- 99 *Ep.* 216 (*Suggestio Dioscori diaconi*), in *Avell. Coll.*, 2, p. 675²¹⁻²³: “*insidiator antiquus excitauit monachos de Scythia, qui de domo magistri militum Uitaliani sunt*” (“an old intriguer stirred up the monks in Scythia, who are of the family of *magister militum* Vitalian”).
- 100 Similarly, Vasile Sibiescu, “Călugării sciți” [The Scythian Monks], *Revista Teologică* 26 (1936), 5–6, pp. 185–187; Popescu, *Christianitas*, pp. 229–230; Ruscu, “The Revolt,” pp. 773–785; Dan Ruscu, “Die skythischen Mönche in der Kirchenpolitik des Oströmischen Reiches zwischen Anastasius und Justinian,” in *Antiquitas Istro-Pontica. Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire ancienne offerts à Alexandru Suceveanu*, eds. Mircea Victor Angelescu et al. (Cluj-Napoca: Mega Éditions, 2010), pp. 186–187.
- 101 Vitalian's confidence in the Scythian monks in matters of faith is evident from some words of the papal legates in Constantinople: “*propter istas nouas suas intentiones Uitaliano magnifico uiro subriperunt et talia uindicare et pro talibus rebus contra nos, quaecumque potuit, impedimenta afferre.*” (“Due to these new opinions of theirs [i.e., the Scythian monks], they cunningly determined the glorious Vitalian to defend such things [i.e., the theoanthropaschite theological formula] and because of them to hinder us as much as he could.”)—*Ep.* 218 (*Suggestio*), in *Avell. Coll.*, 2, p. 679⁸⁻¹¹.

argued by these monks, not by the metropolitan of Tomi or any other hierarch in the region. An indication in this respect is the fact that Paternus of Tomi did not share the point of view of the monks in his province. On the other hand, if the hypothesis on their role as Vitalian's advisers in theological issues is correct, then the idea of a council to reanalyze and detail the Christological teaching may have been advanced by these monks.¹⁰²

The second phase of the theological debates involving Scythian monks took place under Justin I and Justinian I (527–565). The course of these events was the following: as a remedy against Nestorianism and Monophysitism, Scythian monks proposed the theological formula “One of the Holy Trinity suffered/was crucified in the flesh.” Even if similar as form to the Theopaschite formula [“who was crucified for us” (ὁ σταυρωθεὶς δι’ ἡμᾶς)] added to the Trisagion¹⁰³ and mostly to that confessed by archimandrites Dorotheus and Carosus at the Council of Chalcedon [“He who suffered is [one] of the Trinity” (“*ille passus trinitatis est*”)] (see above), the Scythian monks’ formula was totally orthodox, eliminating the Nestorian or Monophysite type of interpretation of the previous conciliar decrees. “One of the Holy Trinity” refers to God the Son (the second person of the Trinity), Who is homoousion (of the same substance) with the Father and the Holy Spirit. The words “suffered/was crucified in the flesh” mean that the Son of God incarnated from the Holy Spirit and from the blessed Mary and suffered on the cross with His human nature, not with the divine one. This combated both the Nestorian heresy, whose followers stated that in Jesus Christ there were two different persons (that of the Son of God and that of the human Jesus) and the Monophysite one (extreme Miaphysitism), stating that in Christ the human nature was completely absorbed by the divine, leaving only a divine nature, with which the Son of God suffered on the cross.¹⁰⁴

In their effort to promote it, Scythian monks first encountered the opposition of Metropolitan Paternus and of his suffragan bishops. The papal legates in Constantinople state that the monks accused (more likely of heresy) Paternus and his suffragan bishops.¹⁰⁵ This leads to the conclusion that the

102 Similarly, Ruscu, “The Revolt,” pp. 776–777 and 784–785. Dominic Moreau (“Les moines scythes,” p. 193) considers that Anastasius I had the idea of calling a synod, as he wanted to weaken Vitalian's authority in this way, through the mediation of the Roman pontiff, who did not want innovations in matters of faith.

103 Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 2/2, trans. John Cawte and Pauline Allen (Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1995), pp. 254–259; Matti Moosa, *The Maronites in History* (Piscataway, New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2005), pp. 69–73; Kazimierz F. Ginter, “The Trisagion Riots (512) as an Example of Interaction between Politics and Liturgy,” *Studia Ceranea* 7 (2017), pp. 41–57.

104 See Duță, “Une rectification terminologique,” pp. 495–505.

105 *Ep. 217 (Suggestio)*, in *Avell. Coll.*, 2, p. 678^{4–5}.

hierarchs in ecclesiastical Scythia had analyzed the theoanthropaschite formula in a provincial synod and rejected it. Their decision must have been motivated by the fact that the formula was not mentioned in the documents of any of the ecumenical councils and, for this reason, it appeared as an innovation in terms of faith. Moreover, as already shown, it resembled the Theopaschite addition to Trisagion, which was contested at that time. The decision of the hierarchs in Scythia displeased the monks and led to the deterioration of the relations between Vitalian (the protector of the monks) and Paternus.¹⁰⁶ Firmly convinced of the orthodoxy of their formula, the Scythian monks continued their efforts, following, most probably, the provisions of the church canons regarding the accusations brought to bishops. In this case, based on canon 6 of the First Council of Constantinople (381) and on canon 9 of the Council of Chalcedon (451), they must have appealed to the judgment of the patriarch in Constantinople.¹⁰⁷ Their approach must have taken place after the death of Emperor Anastasius (†9 July 518), at the time of Patriarch John II of Constantinople (518–520). The hypothesis of this complaint submitted to Constantinople finds support both in the assertions of the papal legates mentioned above and in the coming to Constantinople of (at least) three of the suffragan bishops in Scythia (John of Bosphorus, John of Phanagoria, and John of Odessos), attested at the Home Synod of 518 (20 July).¹⁰⁸ In the case of the last two, their presence in the imperial capital is very unusual, given that no other ordinary bishop of Phanagoria and Odessos is attested in Constantinople in the 5th–6th centuries. Their arrival in the imperial capital can be explained; they must have been called by the patriarch in order to respond to the accusations brought by the Scythian monks.

At the beginning of the year 519, Scythian monks promoted the theoanthropaschite formula in Constantinople, having Vitalian as a main supporter, who later became *magister militum praesentalis*. One of their most ardent opponents was the Constantinopolitan deacon Victor, whom they accused of heresy.¹⁰⁹ It was against him that John Maxentius wrote *Little Book of Faith*, that he presented to the papal legates arrived in Constantinople, without succeeding in winning them over to his and his fellow-countrymen's side. Within an audience held in front of Patriarch John II and the papal legates, the Scythian monks and deacon Victor exposed their points of view, without

106 *Ep.* 217 (*Suggestio*), in *Avell.Coll.*, 2, p. 678^{12–17}.

107 On these canons, see Norman P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, 1 (London: Sheed & Ward, 1990), pp. 33–34 and 91.

108 See *ACO*, III, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1940), pp. 65²¹ and 66⁶.²³

109 *Ep.* 189, in *Avell.Coll.*, 2, p. 647^{5–6}.

any concrete results. Subsequently, a closed-door meeting took place between Vitalian, John II, and deacon Victor, after which the latter refrained from talking publicly about the Scythian formula.¹¹⁰

Shortly before 29 June 519, a part of the Scythian monks left for Rome, to secure Pope Hormisdas' support. Others, led by John Maxentius, remained in Constantinople, where they continued their efforts to promote the formula, and obtained the first favourable results.¹¹¹ The latter aspect is reflected in the progressive change of Justinian's attitude, the future emperor, toward the theanthropopaschite formula. If in the first epistle to the pope, of 29 June 519, he was unfavorable to the Scythian monks, considering that they caused disorder,¹¹² in the following letters he expressed a different viewpoint.¹¹³ Justinian appreciated more and more the Scythian formula and finally accepted it without reserve, considering it totally orthodox and a solution to the conciliation of the Miaphysites with the Catholic Church.¹¹⁴

Nevertheless, the efforts of the Scythian monks' delegation in Rome were not successful. Pope Hormisdas (514–523) refused to give his opinion on

110 *Ep. 224 (Suggestio Dioscori diaconi)*, in *Avell. Coll.*, 2, pp. 685–686.

111 Some scholars state that John Maxentius was also part of the delegation of Scythian monks that left to Rome—see Caesar Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, 9 (Barri-Ducis, Ludovicus Guerin, Eques Ordinis S. Silvestri, 1867), p. 237; Schwartz, “Praefatio,” in *ACO*, IV/2, pp. VIII–X; Mikhail Oksiūk, *Teopashitskie spory* [Theopaschite Controversy] (Kyiv, 1913), p. 547, n. 1. Available at https://azbyka.ru/otechnik/Istoriija_Tserkvi/teopashitskie-spory/#note14_return. Accessed 2022 September 14; Moreau, “Les moines scythes,” p. 200 (if the name Maurice is an altered form of Maxentius or the latter is the same person with presbyter and archimandrite John). Other scholars rightly (from our point of view) rejected the idea of John Maxentius' presence in Rome—see Enrico Noris, *Historia Pelagiana et dissertatio de Synodo v. Oecumenica* (Leuven: apud Henricum Schelte, 1702), pp. 200–201; Loofs, *Leontius von Byzanz*, pp. 233 and 259; Duchesne, *L'Église au VI^e siècle*, p. 63; Schurr, *Die Trinitätslehre*, p. 163, n. 199; Berthold Altaner, *Kleine patristische Schriften*, ed. Günter Glockmann, (Texte und Untersuchungen) 83 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1967), pp. 379–381 and 492–493; François Glorie, “Prolegomena,” in *Maxentii aliorumque scytharum monachorum*, p. XLI; McGuckin, “The ‘Theopaschite Confession,’” p. 244, n. 19; Dumitru Stăniloae, “Scrieri ale «călugărilor sciți daco-romani» din secolul al VI-lea (519–520) (1)” [Writings of «Daco-Roman Scythian Monks» from the 6th Century (519–520) (1)], *Mitropolia Olteniei* 37 (1985), nos. 3–4, p. 210. To support this viewpoint was invoked the fact that John Maxentius' wording in *Responsio adversus epistolam quam ad Possessorem a romano episcopo dicunt haeretici destinatum* (in *Maxentii aliorumque scytharum monachorum*, pp. 138–140) shows that he was not in Rome.

112 *Ep. 187*, in *Avell. Coll.*, 2, p. 644^{9–12}.

113 See *Ep. 188 (Avell. Coll.*, 2, pp. 645–646), *Ep. 191 (Avell. Coll.*, 2, pp. 648–649), *Ep. 196 (Avell. Coll.*, 2, pp. 655–656), *Ep. 235 (Avell. Coll.*, 2, pp. 715–716).

114 See Sibiescu, “Călugării sciți,” pp. 199–204; McGuckin, “The ‘Theopaschite Confession,’” p. 243; Stăniloae, “Scrieri (1),” pp. 204–205 and 209–210.

their teaching and eventually chased them from the city. The monks obtained, according to their own testimony, only the support of the population and of some of the Roman senatorial members of the aristocracy.¹¹⁵ During their stay in Rome (July 519–August 520), they also addressed in writing the African bishops [led by Fulgentius of Ruspe, exiled in Sardinia by Arian Vandal king Thrasamund (450–523)], who approved their action (*Letter 17*).¹¹⁶ Later, in 523, the Scythian monks received *Letter 15* from the African theologians and Fulgentius of Ruspe dedicated to them the writing *The Truth about Predestination and Grace* (*De veritate praedestinationis et gratiae*).¹¹⁷

Regarding the destiny of the theoanthropaschite formula, after Justinian I had proved to be favorable to it in his epistles of the years 519–520, he proclaimed as mandatory a formula similar to that of the Scythian monks in an edict issued on 15 March 533 (when he was emperor).¹¹⁸ Pope John II (533–535) approved it, as well, informing Emperor Justinian I and the senators in Constantinople of this decision by two letters written on 25 March 534.¹¹⁹ The Scythian monks' formula was also introduced in the Greek liturgy, in the year 535 or 536, by the antiphon/second troparion.¹²⁰ In 551 (mid-July), Justinian issued the edict *On the Orthodox Faith*, in which he anathematized

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- 115 Maxentius, *Responsio adversus epistulam*, pp. 138–140. The Scythian monks' influence on the Roman senator Faustus results also from the letter (putting him on his guard against the Scythian formula) addressed to him by presbyter Trifolius [*Epistula ad Faustum*, pp. 137–141].
- 116 Petrus Diaconus et al., *Epistula ad episcopos*, pp. 157–172; Fulgentius Ruspensis et al., *Epistula xvii*, in Fulgentius Ruspensis, *Opera*, ed. Jean Fraipont, (Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina) 91A (Turnhout: Brepols 1972), pp. 563–615; Rob Roy McGregor and Donald Fairbairn, trans., *Fulgentius of Ruspe and the Scythian Monks: Correspondence on Christology and Grace*, introd. and notes Donald Fairbairn (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2013), pp. 25–107.
- 117 Fulgentius Ruspensis, *De veritate praedestinationis et gratiae*, in Fulgentius Ruspensis, *Opera*, pp. 458–548; McGregor and Fairbairn, *Fulgentius of Ruspe*, pp. 121–231. Based on this correspondence, Eduard Schwartz ("Praefatio," *ACO*, IV/2, p. XI) proposed that some of the Scythian monks (Peter, John Maxentius, Leontius, and lector John) took a second trip to Rome. According to Dominic Moreau ("Les moines scythes," p. 198), the correspondence was held from Constantinople, which seems more probable.
- 118 *Codex Iustinianus* 1.1.6, no. 6, in *Corpus Iuris Civilis*, 2, ed. Paul Krüger (Berlin: Weidmanns, 1884), p. 7b: "unus ex trinitate deus verbum homo factus est" ("One of the Trinity, the God Word, was made man").
- 119 *Ep.* 84, in *Avell. Coll.*, ed. Otto Günther, (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum) 35/1 (Prague/Vienna: F. Tempsky; Leipzig: G. Freytag, 1895), pp. 320–328; *ACO*, IV/2, pp. 206–210.
- 120 Venance Grumel, "L'auteur et la date de composition du tropaire 'Ο Μονογενής,'" *Échos d'Orient* 22 (1923), no. 132, pp. 398–418; Jan Harm Barkhuizen, "Justinian's Hymn 'Ο μονογενής υἱός τοῦ Θεοῦ,'" *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 77 (1984), pp. 3–5; Constantine Newman,

those who did not confess this formula,¹²¹ and two years later it was approved by the Second Council of Constantinople (553).¹²²

12.3.2 *Textual Sources about the Scythian Monks*

The number of monks that left from Roman Scythia to Constantinople and, later, to Rome, is not known. Only the names of some of them are mentioned in the extant documents. The most important is considered to be John Maxentius (specifically *Maxentius* or *Maxentius Ioannes*),¹²³ who attributed himself the rank of 'abba':¹²⁴ "And Maxentius, who says that he has, as abba, a congregation ..." ¹²⁵ This title suggests that he was hegumen of a monastery in Scythia and that at least some of the monks that followed him to Constantinople came from the coenobium he headed. However, it is not stated anywhere that he was also a presbyter and he calls himself "*exiguus Maxentius*" ("Maxentius the humble").¹²⁶ Some scholars assume that he became metropolitan of Tomi, identifying him with John (c.530–c.550).¹²⁷

"The Poetry of Theology: An Analysis of Justinian's Hymn 'Ὁ μονογενῆς υἱός,'" *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 43 (1998), pp. 85–91.

121 Eduard Schwartz, *Drei dogmatische Schriften Justinians*, (Abhandlungen der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Neue Folge) 18 (Munich: Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1939), pp. 92⁶⁻⁷ and 93⁶⁻⁷; Richard Price, *The Acts of the Council of Constantinople of 553 with Related Texts on the Three Chapters Controversy*, 1, (Translated Texts for Historians) 51 (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2009), p. 144.

122 *ACO*, IV/1, ed. Johannes Straub (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1971), pp. 218⁵⁻⁶ and 242³⁰⁻³¹; Richard Price, *The Acts*, 2, p. 123: "Si quis non confitetur dominum nostrum Iesum Christum qui crucifixus est carne, deum esse uerum et dominum gloriae et unum de sancta trinitate, talis anathema sit"/"Εἰ τις οὐχ ὁμολογεῖ τὸν ἐσταυρωμένον σαρκὶ κύριον ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν θεὸν εἶναι ἀληθινὸν καὶ κύριον τῆς δόξης καὶ ἓνα τῆς ἁγίας τριάδος, ὁ τοιοῦτος ἀνάθεμα ἔστω." ("If anyone does not profess that our Lord Jesus Christ, crucified in the flesh, is true God and Lord of glory and one of the holy Trinity, let him be anathema.").

123 See Glorie, "Prolegomena," p. XL.

124 The term 'abba,' initially used with the meaning of spiritual father, indicates in this case also an administrative role, namely the head of a monastic community (hegumen).

125 *Ep. 224 (Suggestio Dioscori diaconi)*, in *Avell. Coll.*, 2, p. 687¹⁹⁻²⁰: "Maxentius tamen quod sub abbatis uocabulo dixit se congregationem habere."

126 *ACO*, IV/2, p. 3⁶⁻⁷.

127 Schwartz, *Die sogenannten*, p. 9; Eduard Schwartz, "Praefatio," in *ACO*, 1/5.1, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1924–1925), p. VIII; Schurr, *Die Trinitätslehre*, pp. 180–181; Bark, "John Maxentius," pp. 93–107; Émile Amann, "L'Affaire Nestorius vue de Rome," in *Revue des Sciences Religieuses* 23 (1949), nos. 1–2, p. 13; Francis X. Gumerlock, *Fulgentius of Ruspe on the Saving Will of God: The Development of a Sixth-Century African Bishop's Interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:4 during the Semi-Pelagian Controversy* (Lewiston, N.Y.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2009), p. 79; Ruscu, "Die skythischen Mönche," p. 189; Pereira, *Reception*, pp. 104–105. Contra: Altaner, *Kleine patristische Schriften*, p. 385, n. 4. The possibility that Metropolitan John of Tomi was a Scythian monk is also accepted

John Maxentius is also the author of seven writings (three theological professions and four polemical tractates), all written in Latin.¹²⁸ Their content shows that he was very familiar with the Christological teaching and Augustinian soteriology. His first writing, *Chapters against the Nestorians and the Pelagians for the Satisfaction of the Brothers* (*Capitula contra nestorianos et pelagianos ad satisfactionem fratrum*),¹²⁹ was completed between 518 and March of 519.¹³⁰ It is a short polemical tract in which Maxentius gave a clarifying explanation of Christological and soteriological teachings of the Scythian monks. In the theological profession *Little Book of Faith* (*Libellus fidei*), submitted to

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- by Manfred Oppermann [*Das frühe Christentum an der Westküste des Schwarzen Meeres und im anschließenden Binnenland: historische und archäologische Zeugnisse*, (Schriften des Zentrums für Archäologie und Kulturgeschichte des Schwarzmeerraumes) 19 (Langenweißbach: Beier & Beran, 2010), pp. 43–44], but he does not pronounce on his identity [John Maxentius or presbyter and archimandrite John (on the latter, see below)].
- 128 According to Dominic Moreau (“Les moines scythes,” pp. 198–201), the name of Maxentius was borne by two of the Scythian monks. One of them would have been abba Maxentius (Exiguus), whose name was not also John (see also Glorie, “Prolegomena,” pp. XL–XLI), and who would have written only *Libellus fidei*. The second would be presbyter and archimandrite John, successor of Maxentius (Exiguus) in leading the Scythian monks after the latter’s death. Also then, John would have taken over the name of Maxentius, in honor of the former Scythian leader. This John (Maxentius) would be the real author of all the other works attributed (erroneously) to Maxentius (Exiguus). Moreau did not exclude the possibility (even if he considered it less probable) that the two of them may have been the same person. In favour of the attribution to Maxentius (Exiguus) only of *Libellus fidei*, Moreau invoked the fact that in the preserved manuscript of the Scythian monks’ writings, after *Libellus fidei* (in whose title *exiguus Maxentius* appears as the author—ACO, IV/2, p. 3^{6–7}), second book (*Capitula contra nestorianos et pelagianos*) is preceded by the mention “*incipit capitula Maxenti Iohannis*” (ACO, IV/2, p. 10⁶), which would suppose (in Moreau’s interpretation) that the previous work was not his, but of another author’s [Maxentius (Exiguus)]. However, this argument of the French scholar is annulled by the title of the sixth study of the manuscript. Thus, the third (*Professio brevissima*), the fourth (*Brevissima adunationis*), and the fifth (*Responsio contra acephalos*) works start with *item incipit eiusdem* (ACO, IV/2, pp. 11¹, 38 and 12¹³), but in the title of the sixth (*Dialogi contra nestorianos*) the name of John Maxentius is mentioned again: *Incipit praeformatio Dialogi Maxenti Iohannis servi Dei contra Nestorianos* (ACO, IV/2, p. 14²⁴). If Moreau’s logic is applied also in this case, this means that the previous works are not of John (Maxentius). Therefore, most likely there is only one Maxentius (named either Maxentius, or Maxentius John), who is the author of all these works and who is different from presbyter and archimandrite John.
- 129 Maxentius, *Capitula contra nestorianos et pelagianos ad satisfactionem fratrum*, in *Maxentii aliorumque scytharum monachorum*, pp. 29–30; McGregor and Fairbairn, *Fulgentius of Ruspe*, pp. 235–236.
- 130 Matthew Joseph Pereira, “John Maxentius and the Scythian Monks,” in *Encyclopedia of Medieval Philosophy: Philosophy between 500 and 1500*, ed. Henrik Lagerlund (Dordrecht: Springer, 2011), p. 968.

the papal legates in Constantinople, he explains the *theoanthropopaschite* formula and the teaching on divine grace.¹³¹ The other writings are the professions *A Brief Confession of the Catholic Faith* (*Professio brevissima catholicae fidei*)¹³² and *Very Brief Reasoning for Uniting the Word of God to Particular Flesh* (*Brevissima adunationis ratio Verbi Dei ad propriam carnem*),¹³³ and the polemical works *Response against the Ones without a Head* (*Responsio contra acephalos*),¹³⁴ *Dialogue against the Nestorians* (*Dialogus contra nestorianos*) (two books),¹³⁵ and *Response against the Epistle, Which the Heretics Say Was Designated to Possessor from the Roman Bishop* (*Responsio adversus epistulam quam ad Possessorem a romano episcopo dicunt haeretici destinatum*). In the latter, written in October or November of 520,¹³⁶ he rejected the pope's criticism of the Scythian monks who had travelled to Rome. At its end, John Maxentius also attached several chapters of the works of Faustus of Riez and Augustine of Hippo, in order to combat Pelagianism and to defend the doctrine on predestination.¹³⁷

Some of the Scythian monks that got to Rome are known by their name. They are mentioned in various documents: two letters (nos. 187 and 191) of Justinian addressed to Pope Hormisdas; the letter sent by the Scythian monks to the African bishops exiled in Sardinia; the response letter (no. 17) of the African bishops to the Scythian monks in Rome; the Preface of Dionysius Exiguus to the translation of Epistles 45 and 46 of Cyril of Alexandria; the reports of the papal legates in Constantinople; the letter of the presbyter Trifolius to the Roman senator Faustus.

The letter to the African bishops (*Epistula ad episcopos*)¹³⁸ is signed by four of the Scythian monks arrived in Rome: deacon Peter, monk John, monk

131 Maxentius, *Libellus fidei*, in *Maxentii aliorumque scytharum monachorum*, pp. 5–25; Pereira, *Reception*, pp. 533–541.

132 Maxentius, *Professio brevissima catholicae fidei*, in *Maxentii aliorumque scytharum monachorum*, pp. 33–36; Pereira, *Reception*, pp. 541–542.

133 Maxentius, *Brevissima adunationis ratio Verbi Dei ad propriam carnem*, in *Maxentii aliorumque scytharum monachorum*, pp. 39–40; Pereira, *Reception*, p. 543.

134 Maxentius, *Responsio contra acephalos*, in *Maxentii aliorumque scytharum monachorum*, pp. 43–47; Pereira, *Reception*, pp. 543–546.

135 Maxentius, *Dialogus contra nestorianos*, in *Maxentii aliorumque scytharum monachorum*, pp. 51–110.

136 Florea Duță, *Les théologiens scythes de 440 à 553. La formule théoanthropopaschite (théosarkopaschite)* [Ph.D. thesis] (Université des sciences humaines de Strasbourg, 1998), p. 121.

137 Maxentius, *Responsio adversus epistulam*, pp. 115–153; Pereira, *Reception*, pp. 546–565.

138 Petrus Diaconus et al., *Epistula ad episcopos*, in *Maxentii aliorumque scytharum monachorum*, pp. 157–172; McGregor and Fairbairn, *Fulgentius of Ruspe*, pp. 25–42.

Leontius, and lector John.¹³⁹ Deacon Peter, the first of the signatories, is considered by some scholars as the real author of the letter.¹⁴⁰ Others consider John Maxentius as its author, which is unlikely, since he did not travel to Rome.¹⁴¹ However, deacon Peter was most likely a co-author, together with the other signatories of the letter.¹⁴² This point of view finds support in that the epistle was signed only by some of the members of the Scythian delegation arrived in Rome. If the author of the letter had been just Peter, it would have been natural for the epistle to have been signed only by him (as author), or by all the other members of the delegation, as his sustainers, and not just by some of the monks. Peter may have had the greatest contribution to the writing of the letter and might have been helped in this effort by the other signatories.

As shown by his signature, Peter had the rank of deacon. This proves that he was one of the educated monks of the monastery he represented.¹⁴³ His name is not mentioned in any other document.

The second signatory, John, had no rank within the Church; he was a simple monk, as shown by his signature. His name is also mentioned in Justinian's letters 187 and 191 to Pope Hormisdas, as a member of the Scythian delegation that left for Rome.¹⁴⁴ He also appears as addressee of the Dionysius Exiguus'

139 Petrus Diaconus et al., *Epistula ad episcopos*, p. 172³⁹³⁻³⁹⁶; trans., p. 42.

140 Christian Wilhelm Franz Walch, *Entwurf einer vollständigen Historie der Kezereyen, Spaltungen und Religionsstreitigkeiten, bis auf die Zeiten der Reformation*, 7 (Leipzig: Reich Weidmann, 1776), p. 298; Berthold Altaner, *Kleine patristische Schriften*, ed. Günter Glockmann, (Texte und Untersuchungen) 83 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1967), p. 506; Thomas A. Smith, *De Gratia. Faustus of Riez's Treatise on Grace and Its Place in the History of Theology*, (Christianity and Judaism in Antiquity) 4 (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990), p. 4.

141 Eligius Dekkers and Emil Gaar, *Clavis Patrum Latinorum*, 3rd. ed., (Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina) (Turnhout: Brepols, 1995), no. 663, p. 234 (*spuria*); McGuckin, "The Theopaschite Confession," p. 246.

142 Duță, *Les théologiens scythes*, p. 184.

143 In accordance with Basil the Great's monastic rule, going out of the monastery was permitted only to the monks that were able to resist the multiple temptations that could assault them in the world—see Basilus Magnus, *Regulae fusius tractatae* 44, PG 31:1029–1032; trans., pp. 256–257. This means that all the Scythian monks who left their province were considered mature enough from a spiritual point of view to resist the temptations from outside the monastery.

144 *Ep.* 187, in *Avell. Coll.* 2, pp. 644²⁴–645¹: "*sunt autem nomina eorum Achilles, Iohannes, Leontius et Mauritiuſ*" ("And the names of these [Scythian monks] are: Achilles, John, Leontius, and Maurice"); p. 648²³⁻²⁵: "*unde petimus ut, si est possibile, celerrimo dato responso et satisfactis religiosis monachis Iohannem et Leontium ad nos remittatis.*" ("that is why we ask, if it is possible, after giving a quick answer and the religious monks are satisfied, to send John and Leontius back.").

Preface to the translation of the two letters (45 and 46) of Cyril of Alexandria¹⁴⁵ and is mentioned in the title of the letter addressed by presbyter Trifolius to the Roman senator Faustus against the teachings promoted by the Scythian monks.¹⁴⁶ Some scholars identify him with the presbyter and archimandrite John (see below) and assert that after the death of Maxentius he became the leader of the Scythian monks and later metropolitan of Tomi.¹⁴⁷

More data has been preserved regarding the third signatory, Leontius. The mention ‘*monachus*’ (‘monk’) of his signature reveals that he had no rank within the Church at that time (the beginning of the year 520), either. However, his being co-author of the epistle to the African bishops proves that, just like John the second signatory, he was an educated monk. Leontius appears also as addressee of Dionysius’ translation of the two epistles of Cyril, together with the same John.¹⁴⁸ He is also known to have been a family relation of count Vitalian. The information is provided by deacon Dioscorus, the papal legate in Constantinople, in his letter (*suggestio*) addressed to the pope on 29 June 519: “These monks, among whom there is also Leontius, who says that he is a parent of the master of the soldiers [Vitalian] ...”¹⁴⁹ His name is also mentioned in Justinian’s letters 187 and 191, as a member of the Scythian delegation that left to Rome.¹⁵⁰

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- 145 Dionysius Exiguus, *Praefatio ad Ioannem et Leontium*, p. 55¹. Some scholars identified this monk John with John Maxentius [Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, p. 240; Schwartz, “Praefatio,” *ACO*, IV/2, p. v; Dekkers and Gaar, *Clavis Patrum Latinorum*, no. 653a, p. 231]. The identification was rejected by Berthold Altaner (*Kleine patristische Schriften*, p. 379) based on the fact that Maxentius is never named in documents only John, but either Maxentius John, or Maxentius.
- 146 Trifolius, *Epistula ad Faustum*, p. 137.
- 147 Glorie, “Prolegomena,” pp. XXXVIII and XLI; Moreau, “Les moines scythes,” pp. 198–201; Dominic Moreau, “To Baptise in Late Antiquity—An Unfounded Episcopal Prerogative. Some Remarks Inspired by the ‘Scythian’ Case,” *Rivista di Archeologia Cristiana* 98 (2022), no. 1, p. 117. Contra: Duță, *Les théologiens scythes*, pp. 147–148.
- 148 Dionysius Exiguus, *Praefatio ad Ioannem et Leontium*, p. 55².
- 149 *Ep.* 216 (*Suggestio Dioscori diaconi*), in *Avell. Coll.*, 2, p. 675^{26–27}: “*isti monachi, inter quos est et Leontius, qui se dicit parentem esse magistri militum ...*”
- 150 *Ep.* 187, in *Avell. Coll.*, 2, pp. 644²⁴–645¹; *Ep.* 191, in *Avell. Coll.*, 2, p. 648^{23–25}. Friedrich Loofs (*Leontius von Byzanz*, pp. 228–261) identified the Scythian monk Leontius with the theologian Leontius of Byzantium, an idea accepted by some scholars [see Vincent Ermoni, *De Leontio Byzantino et de eius doctrina christologica* (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1895), pp. 7–19; Otto Bardenhewer, *Patrologie*, 3rd ed. (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 1910), p. 472; Sibiescu, “Călugării scii,” p. 184; Stăniloae, “Scrieri (1),” pp. 211–214], but rejected with arguments by Berthold Altaner (*Kleine patristische Schriften*, pp. 375–391).

The last signatory of the letter to the Africans, also named John, was a minor office-bearer (*lector* or *anagnostes*).¹⁵¹ In the African bishops' response letter addressed to the Scythian monks, he is mentioned as 'another John' ('*alius Ioannes*').¹⁵² His name does not appear in any other document.

Some scholars have considered the possibility for the authors of the Epistle to the Africans (deacon Peter, monks John and Leontius, and lector John) to have been also the authors of the patristical texts collection *Exempla sanctorum patrum*.¹⁵³ Others attribute it to an unknown Scythian monk.¹⁵⁴ The collection, dated in 519/520, was elaborated in Constantinople,¹⁵⁵ including selected texts from the writings of Augustine of Hippo, Ambrose of Milan, Hilary of Poitiers, Cyprian of Carthage, Athanasius of Alexandria, Gregory of Nazianzus, Basil the Great, and Gregory of Nyssa.¹⁵⁶

Achilles, Maurice, deacons John and Venerius, as well as presbyter and archimandrite John were also members of the Scythian delegation to Rome. Achilles and Maurice are mentioned in Justinian's letter (no. 187) addressed to Pope Hormisdas on 29 June 519.¹⁵⁷ Achilles is also mentioned in the letter addressed to Pope Hormisdas by the Roman legate Dioscorus on 15 October 519, being discredited: "If I want to speak about Achilles, it is also useless; as for him it is enough to always hide because of his conscience condemned by all Catholics."¹⁵⁸

151 On *lector*, see Henri Leclercq, "Lecteur," in *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie chrétienne et de Liturgie*, 8/2, eds. Fernand Cabrol and Henri Leclercq (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1929), col. 2241–2269.

152 Fulgentius Ruspensis et al., *Epistula XVII*, p. 563³; McGregor and Fairbairn, *Fulgentius of Ruspe*, p. 43.

153 See Duță, *Les théologiens scythes*, pp. 115 and 123–124.

154 Schurr, *Die Trinitätslehre*, pp. 185–195; Altaner, *Kleine patristische Schriften*, pp. 489–494; Dekkers and Gaar, *Clavis Patrum Latinorum*, no. 654, p. 232.

155 Schurr, *Die Trinitätslehre*, pp. 185–195 (in 519–520); Altaner, *Kleine patristische Schriften*, pp. 489–494 (in 519).

156 *Exempla sanctorum patrum* was published in critical edition by Eduard Schwartz (*ACO*, IV/2, pp. 74–96) and Salvator Gennaro [(*Corpus Christianorum*, Series Latina) 85 (Turnhout: Brepols, 1972), pp. 85–129]. According to Florian Duță (*Les théologiens scythes*, p. 113), the collection is a real patristic guide made available to the promoters of the theanthropopaschite theological formula.

157 *Avell. Coll.*, 2, pp. 644²⁴–645¹. Certain scholars identify Maurice with John Maxentius—see Baronius, *Annales Ecclesiastici*, p. 237; Oksiūk, *Teopaskhitskie spory*, p. 22, n. 44; Moreau, "Les moines scythes," p. 200 (as a possibility).

158 *Ep.* 224 (*Suggestio Dioscori diaconi*), in *Avell. Coll.*, 2, p. 687²²⁻²⁵: "*similiter et si de Achille dicere uoluerō, rem facio superuacua; cui hoc sufficit: semper latere propter conscientiam suam ab omnibus catholicis damnatam.*" Dominic Moreau ("Les moines scythes," p. 198) considers the possibility for Achilles not to have come to Rome, as his name is not mentioned in any of the documents related to the activity of the Scythian monks there.

Deacon John was the one who took the Scythian monks' letter to the African bishops exiled in Sardinia. In their response letter, he is named "our blessed brother, deacon John" ("*beatus frater noster Ioannes diaconus*").¹⁵⁹

The last two (supposed) members of the Scythian delegation to Rome known by their names (John and Venerius) were the addressees of another letter (no. 15)¹⁶⁰ of the African bishops and of Fulgentius of Ruspe's treatise *The Truth about Predestination and Grace*, written in the year 523.¹⁶¹ It seems probable that at the moment of this correspondence John and Venerius may have been in Constantinople or in Scythia, but the basis of their relations with the African bishops may have been laid in the years 519–520, when (they are supposed to have been) in Rome. Both writings of the African theologians were elaborated in the context of their relations with the Scythian monks.¹⁶² John is mentioned with the title of 'presbyter and archimandrite' ('*presbyter et archimandrita*')¹⁶³ in Letter 15 and with that of 'presbyter' ('*presbyter*') in Fulgentius' treatise.¹⁶⁴ This shows that he was a hieromonk and leader of a coenobium in Scythia, having the most important church rank (archimandrite) from all the Scythian monks known. He may have been the leader of the Scythian delegation left to the West and later may have become metropolitan of Tomi (c.520–c.550) (and not John Maxentius or the monk John).¹⁶⁵

There is no other information preserved about deacon Venerius. His title and the context of his mentioning only show the fact that he was a deacon in a monastery of Scythia in 523.

159 Fulgentius Ruspensis et al., *Epistula xvii*, p. 563⁹; trans., p. 43. Berthold Altaner (*Kleine patristische Schriften*, p. 389) identify deacon John with monk John, the second signatory of the letter to the African bishops. Dominic Moreau ("Les moines scythes," p. 199) considers the possibility that deacon John might be the same as the homonymous deacon who questioned Boethius regarding the theoanthropaschite formula [Boethius, *Utrum Pater et Filius*, in Boethius, *Theological Tractates. The Consolation of Philosophy*, trans. H.F. Stewart, E.K. Rand, and S.J. Tester, (Loeb Classical Library) 74 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1973), pp. 32–33], in which case he was not a Scythian monk.

160 Fulgentius Ruspensis et al., *Epistula xv*, in Fulgentius Ruspensis, *Opera*, pp. 447–457; McGregor and Fairbairn, *Fulgentius of Ruspe*, pp. 108–120.

161 Fulgentius Ruspensis, *De veritate*, pp. 458–548; McGregor and Fairbairn, *Fulgentius of Ruspe*, pp. 121–231.

162 Émile Amann ["Sémi-Pélagiens," in *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, 14/2, eds. Alfred Vacant, Eugène Mangenot, and Émile Amann (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1941), col. 1840] considers that John and Venerius were not Scythian monks.

163 Fulgentius Ruspensis et al., *Epistula xv*, p. 447²⁻³; trans., p. 108.

164 Fulgentius Ruspensis, *De veritate*, p. 458¹.

165 Similarly, Duță, "Nouvelles considérations," pp. 147–148.

The author of *Collectio Palatina* was also a Scythian monk of the first half of the 6th century, unknown by name.¹⁶⁶ *Collectio Palatina* is a florilegium of theological texts directed against Pelagianism and Nestorianism.¹⁶⁷ It also includes the older collection of Marius Mercator (c.390–c.451).¹⁶⁸ Two of the texts [*Disputation on the Twelve Chapters (Disputatio XII capitulorum)* and *Refutation of the Writings of Nestorius (Refutatio quorundam Nestorii dicatorum)*] and the *Epilogue (Epilogus)* are the original creation of the Scythian compiler.¹⁶⁹ At the end of the florilegium, he also attached a short theological treatise (*Disputatio de nestorianis et eutychnianis*) elaborated by “our most blessed father John, bishop of the city of Tomi in the province of Scythia” (“*beatissimi patris nostri Ioannis Tomitanae urbis episcopi, prouinciae Scythiae*”).¹⁷⁰

The period of this John of Tomi’ episcopate is a subject of debate. Some scholars date it in the 5th century, between that of Timothy, who represented the see of Tomi at the First Council of Ephesus (431), and that of Alexander, who participated in the hearing of 449 (13 April) in Constantinople.¹⁷¹ Others date it to the second quarter of the 6th century (c.530–c.550), between those

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- 166 Schwartz, *Die sogenannten*, p. 22; Schwartz, “Praefatio,” in *ACO*, I/5.1, pp. VII–IX; B. Nisters, “Die Collectio Palatina,” *Theologische Quartalschrift* 113 (1932), nos. 1–2, pp. 119–137; Bark, “John Maxentius,” p. 104; Amann, “L’Affaire Nestorius,” p. 15; Altaner, *Kleine patristische Schriften*, p. 496, n. 5; Berthold Altaner, *Patrology*, trans. Hilda C. Graef (New York: Herder and Herder, 1961), p. 290; Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 2/1, p. 27; Duță, “Nouvelles considérations,” p. 150; Pereira, “John Maxentius,” p. 969; Moreau, “Les moines scythes,” p. 190.
- 167 *Collectio Palatina* was published in a critical edition by Eduard Schwartz (*ACO*, I/5.1, pp. 3–215). Later, François Glorie (*Corpus Christianorum. Series Latina*, 85A, pp. 183–239) republished the passages relevant for the history of the Scythian monks from this collection.
- 168 According to Florian Duță (“Nouvelles considérations,” p. 141), Marius Mercator can be attributed 65 pages of the 215 of *Collectio Palatina* included in the edition of Eduard Schwartz.
- 169 See Glorie, “Prolegomena,” pp. XXXIX, 195–224 and 231–234; Dekkers and Gaar, *Clavis Patrum Latinorum*, p. 234, Duță, “Nouvelles considérations,” p. 150.
- 170 *Coll.Pall.*, ed. Glorie, p. 234^{22–25}.
- 171 Michael Le Quien, *Oriens christianus*, 1 (Paris: Ex typographia regia, 1740), col. 1215; Germain Morin, “Le témoignage perdu de Jean évêque de Tomi sur les hérésies de Nestorius et d’Eucychès,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 7 (1905), no. 25, pp. 74 and 77; Raymund Netzhammer, *Die christlichen Altertümer der Dobrudscha* (Bucharest: SOCEC & Co., 1918), pp. 47–50; Jacques Zeiller, *Les origines chrétiennes dans les provinces danubiennes de l’empire romain* (Paris: De Boccard, 1918), pp. 172–173; Nicolae Șerbănescu, “1600 de ani de la prima mărturie documentară despre existența Episcopiei Tomisului” [1600 Years since the First Documentary Attestation of the Bishopric of Tomi], *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 87 (1969), nos. 9–10, pp. 1015–1016; Popescu, *Christianitas*, pp. 211–212 and 214; Virgil Lungu, *Creștinismul în Scythia Minor în contextul vest-pontic* [The Christianity in Scythia Minor in the West-Pontic Context] (Sibiu/Constanța: T.C. Sen, 2000), p. 79.

of Paternus (498–c.520) and Valentinian (c.550).¹⁷² Others considered the existence of two hierarchs of Tomi with this name, who oversaw the Scythian Church in 440–448 and 530–550, respectively.¹⁷³ Florian Duță (the main supporter of the latter thesis) invokes two arguments in favour of the existence of John of Tomi in the 5th century: (i.) internal criteria in *Disputatio*, attached at the end of *Collectio Palatina*, which would plead for the dating of the writing between the First Council of Ephesus and the Council of Chalcedon; (ii.) the discovery in Tomi of an impost of a marble capital (5th century) carrying a cruciform monogram (with the letters A, N, Y, and Ω) representing (according to an interpretation) the name of Bishop John of Tomi (‘Ιωάννου’).¹⁷⁴

Nevertheless, it is unlikely for the monogram on the capital found in Tomi to have belonged to a bishop.¹⁷⁵ The fact that the episcopal rank is not mentioned (nor any other ecclesiastical rank) supports an ordinary Christian (most probably a wealthy one) named John, who financed the making (at least) of the marble column on which the capital was fixed. On the other hand, if *Disputatio* belongs to a Bishop John of the 5th century, there is no other argument in favour of the existence of a homonymous hierarch in the 6th century. In fact, the only documentary mention of a bishop of Tomi with this name is that of the epilogue of *Collectio Palatina*. Therefore, his episcopate can be dated either to the 5th or the 6th century. Of the arguments proposed by scholars in favour of the two dates, those in favour of the 6th century seem more convincing.¹⁷⁶ In this case, the identification of this Bishop John with one of the Scythian monks with this name can be taken into account. It can be appreciated that,

172 Schwartz, *Die sogenannten*, p. 9; Schwartz, “Praefatio,” in *ACO*, I/5.1, p. VIII; Schurr, *Die Trinitätslehre*, pp. 180–181; Bark, “John Maxentius,” pp. 94–107; Robert Devreesse, *Essai sur Théodore de Mopsueste*, (Studi e testi) 141 (Citta del Vaticano: Biblioteca apostolica vaticana, 1948), p. 165, n. 7 (as a first possibility); Amann, “L’Affaire Nestorius,” p. 13; Glorie, “Prolegomena,” p. XXXVIII and XLI; Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 2/1, p. 27; Ruscu, “Die skythischen Mönche,” p. 189; Pereira, *Reception*, pp. 104–105; Moreau, “Les moines scythes,” pp. 198–201; Moreau, “To Baptise,” p. 117.

173 Devreesse, *Essai*, p. 165, n. 7 (as a second possibility); Duță, “Nouvelles considérations,” pp. 148–156.

174 On this impost, see Ion Barnea, “Monumente de artă creștină descoperite pe teritoriul Republicii Populare Române” [Christian Art Monuments Discovered on the Territory of the People’s Republic of Romania], *Studii Teologice* 17 (1965), nos. 3–4, pp. 151 (fig. 15) and 153–154; Ion Barnea, *Christian Art in Romania*, 1 (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1979), plate 73, pp. 182–183.

175 Similarly, Robert Born, *Die Christianisierung der Städte der Provinz Scythia Minor ein Beitrag zum spätantiken Urbanismus auf dem Balkan*, (Spätantike—Frühes Christentum—Byzanz. Reihe B, Studien und Perspektiven) 36 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2012), p. 30.

176 In favour of the 5th century: Duță, “Nouvelles considérations,” pp. 148–156. In favour of the 6th century: Bark, “John Maxentius,” pp. 93–107.

once the theoanthropaschite formula was officially approved, the monks' prestige increased significantly within the Church in Scythia. Moreover, the possibility for Justinian I, who became an adherent of the formula, to have sustained the election of one of the monks for the see of Tomi seems plausible. It is difficult to say, however, if that monk was John Maxentius or presbyter and archimandrite John. *Collectio Palatina* compiler's mention "our father John," and not Maxentius or Maxentius John, pleads in favour of the latter (presbyter and archimandrite John), as in the other extant documents Maxentius is never mentioned only as John.

On the other hand, given that ordinary bishoprics (fourteen, possibly sixteen),¹⁷⁷ were organized in the cities of Roman Scythia in 536, it is not excluded for other monks of the province to have been elected as hierarchs for some of them. This could have been a means of reward for their effort during the Christological debates of the previous decades.

12.3.3 *The State of Scythian Monasticism in the First Half of the 6th Century*

As can be noticed, the number of the Scythian monks directly involved in the promotion of the theoanthropaschite formula was quite large. They came from at least two monasteries, a proof in this respect being the presence of two hegumens among them: John Maxentius and presbyter and archimandrite John. They are the oldest Scythian monastery leaders known by their names.¹⁷⁸ Mention must be made of the diversity of the functions and ecclesiastical ranks held by the monks: from simple monks or lectors, to deacons, presbyters, and even archimandrites. This confirms the good internal organization of the Istro-Pontic monasteries at that time, similar to that of the great monasteries of the empire.

The promotion of the theoanthropaschite theological formula by monks of at least two coenobia reveals the relations that existed at that time between some of the monastic communities in the province.¹⁷⁹ It is difficult to say if

177 See above, subchapter 3.3: 'The first ordinary bishoprics in the Roman province of Scythia.'

178 It is possible for such a rank to have been held also by Theotimus I and Peter before their election as metropolitans of Tomi.

179 The relations between the monasteries in the province are encouraged by Basil the Great in his rule. He recommends the leaders of coenobia to gather periodically in order to discuss disciplinary issues (Basilius Magnus, *Regulae fusius tractatae* 54, PG 31:1044; trans., p. 264: "It is indeed advantageous that at certain fixed times and places a meeting is held of those in charge of the communities ...") and disposes that every hegumen should be elected by the superiors of the other monasteries (Basilius Magnus, *Regulae fusius tractatae* 43.2, PG 31:1029; trans., p. 256: "He does not take for himself the post of leader, but

this collaboration existed between all the coenobia in Roman Scythia. If Metropolitan Paternus came also from among the local monks, then his attitude against the formula pleads in favour of the existence of a scission between some of the monastic centres there.¹⁸⁰ These supposed disagreements could be explained by a poor communication between the monasteries due to the geographical distance that separated them (see Map 9).

In what concerns the theological knowledge on the Christological teaching of the Scythian monks involved in the debates, they were superior to many of the contemporary theologians. The arguments and explanations exposed in their works reveal that they were able to notice and annihilate the heretics' subtleties. Their higher theological instruction is (ironically) admitted also by the papal legates in Constantinople (who were against them): "That is why we exposed these one by one [i.e., the presentation and the opposition to the theological views of the Scythian monks], lest their subtlety should boast against our simplicity."¹⁸¹ Besides, even if the identification of the Scythian monk Leontius with Leontius of Byzantium is less credible, the similarity between John Maxentius' Christological teaching and that subsequently exposed by Leontius of Byzantium in his writings is noteworthy, which reveals the Scythian monk's profound thought.¹⁸² Moreover, the official approval of the theopaschite formula by the Second Council of Constantinople indicates its correctness and its value in the context of contemporary theological debates. These observations are reinforced also by John Maxentius' words:

And we also, following the example of these [i.e., Cyril of Alexandria and Pope Leo I], were forced to oppose them [i.e., the Nestorians], who work to support the error of their impiousness with the authority of the Synod [of Chalcedon], so to speak, and strive to distort the words uttered in simplicity and integrity by the holy fathers, [were forced to oppose them] armed with the sentences of holy men and most excellent teachers, and to refute their impious assertion through the grace of God, accusing them

is chosen by the eminent in the other communities, having given in his life till then sufficient proof of his character ...").

180 On the theological disputes between the Christian communities in Roman Scythia at the time, see also Dana Iuliana Viezure, "On the Origins of the *Unus de Trinitate* Controversy," *Annual of Medieval Studies at Central European University Budapest* 10 (2004), pp. 15-19.

181 *Ep.* 218 (*Suggestio*), in *Avell. Coll.* 2, p. 679⁷⁻⁸.

182 See McGuckin, "The 'Theopaschite Confession,'" pp. 239-246; Stăniloae, "Scrieri (1)," p. 212; Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, 2/2, pp. 317-338; Duță, "Une rectification terminologique," pp. 495-505.

to be evidently thoroughly contrary to the doctrine of the holy fathers and of the same Council.¹⁸³

The Scythian monks' high theological knowledge must not surprise anyone. As already shown, Dionysius Exiguus reminds of the existence of an old theological tradition in the monasteries of the province of Scythia, in the period he spent there. Also, the numerous quotes from the writings of Eastern and Western theologians used by the Scythian monks in their works prove that they regularly enriched their knowledge, being informed on the theological teachings of their time. John Maxentius, for example, uses in his writings quotations from Definition of the Faith of the Council of Chalcedon,¹⁸⁴ from Gregory of Nazianzus,¹⁸⁵ Cyril of Alexandria,¹⁸⁶ Proclus of Constantinople,¹⁸⁷ Flavian of Constantinople,¹⁸⁸ Pope Leo I,¹⁸⁹ Augustine of Hippo,¹⁹⁰ Ps. Athanasius,¹⁹¹ and also mentions the names of certain theologians condemned as heretics or removed from the episcopal seat during the Christological debates of the 5th and 6th centuries, whose doctrinal deviations he knew.¹⁹² The Scythian monks who addressed the African bishops exiled in Sardinia, benefiting also of Dionysius Exiguus' support, quoted in their letter excerpts from Definition of the Faith of the Council of Chalcedon,¹⁹³ from the writings of Gregory of

183 Maxentius, *Libellus fidei*, p. 7⁴⁴⁻⁵¹; Pereira, *Reception*, p. 534.

184 Maxentius, *Libellus fidei*, pp. 10¹⁰⁶⁻¹¹²⁴ and 20³⁰⁵⁻³⁰⁷.

185 See Maxentius, *Libellus fidei*, p. 13¹⁵⁷⁻¹⁶¹, where an excerpt is quoted from the *Letter (no. 101) to Cleodnius, against Apollinarius*.

186 See Maxentius, *Libellus fidei*, pp. 12¹³⁵⁻¹⁴⁴, 13¹⁵³⁻¹⁵⁷, 19²⁹⁴⁻²⁰³⁰³, and 21³³⁵⁻³³⁹, where passages are quoted from the *Letter (no. 4) to Nestorius*, the *Third Letter to Nestorius (no. 17 or the Synodal Letter)*, and *Scholia of the Incarnation of the Only-Begotten*.

187 Maxentius, *Libellus fidei*, pp. 16²¹²⁻¹⁷²⁴⁸. John Maxentius made there a confusion between two writings of Proclus of Constantinople. He referred to the *Tome to the Armenians*, but quoted from *On the faith*.

188 See Maxentius, *Libellus fidei*, p. 14¹⁷²⁻¹⁷⁶, where a fragment is quoted from *Declaration of Faith to the Emperor Theodosius*.

189 See Maxentius, *Libellus fidei*, pp. 6⁴⁰, 8⁶⁹, and 21³³³⁻³³⁴, where either the name of Pope Leo I is mentioned, or is quoted in the *Letter (no. 28) to Flavian of Constantinople*.

190 See Maxentius, *Libellus fidei*, pp. 14¹⁹¹, 15¹⁹³⁻²⁰⁶, and 23³⁶⁷⁻³⁷², where are quoted *On the Trinity*, *Enchiridion to Laurentius on Faith, Hope and Love*, and *Chapters of Saint Augustine Transmitted into the City of Rome*.

191 See Maxentius, *Libellus fidei*, pp. 11¹³⁰⁻¹²¹³⁴, where is quoted *On the Incarnation of Christ against Apollinarius*.

192 They are Paul of Samosata, Photius, Sabellius, Arius, Apollinarius, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Nestorius, Eutyches, Dioscorus I of Alexandria, Timothy Ailuros, Peter of Alexandria, Peter of Antioch, Acacius of Constantinople, Pelagius, and Celestus.

193 Petrus Diaconus et al., *Epistula ad episcopos*, p. 164¹⁷⁵⁻¹⁷⁷.

Nazianzus,¹⁹⁴ Cyril of Alexandria,¹⁹⁵ Basil the Great,¹⁹⁶ Augustine of Hippo,¹⁹⁷ the Antiochene presbyter Malchion,¹⁹⁸ Ps. Athanasius,¹⁹⁹ Ps. Innocent,²⁰⁰ Ps. Celestine,²⁰¹ from a supposed epistle of the participants in the North African Council of Milevis (416) to Pope Zosimus (417–418),²⁰² and referred to the letters of Pope Leo I.²⁰³ Furthermore, as already shown, two patristic texts collections (*Exempla sanctorum patrum* and *Collectio palatina*) were elaborated by some of the Scythian monks. The value bestowed by the Scythian monks to the patristic writings is clearly expressed by John Maxentius in his *Prologus to Little Book of Faith*, where he asserts that the doctrine of faith must be reinforced with such texts.²⁰⁴ In one of his works, the Scythian monks' leader also refers to the last (of those times) edition in Latin of the Bible, comparing its text with that of an older edition.²⁰⁵

Even if they got to know some of these books during their stay in Constantinople or in Rome, several conclusions can be drawn: 1. The assiduous study of theological literature by the Scythian monks; 2. The existence of libraries in some of the monasteries in Roman Scythia at that time; 3. The monks were well informed about contemporary theological debates.

John Maxentius' answer to the accusations brought to the Scythian monks by Pope Hormisdas (in the response letter addressed to the African Bishop Possessor) proves also that the monasteries in Scythia kept communion with the Roman Church during the Acacian schism (484–519):

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- 194 See Petrus Diaconus et al., *Epistula ad episcopos*, pp. 180^{64–67} and 161^{119–123}, where they quote the *Letter (no. 101) to Cledonius, against Apollinarius* and *Oration 29 (On the Son)*.
- 195 See Petrus Diaconus et al., *Epistula ad episcopos*, pp. 159^{45–52}, 160^{72–76}, and 162^{136–139}, where they quote from the *Letter (no. 46) to Succ(e)nssus* and the *Synodal Letter*, both translated by Dionysius Exiguus.
- 196 See Petrus Diaconus et al., *Epistula ad episcopos*, p. 170^{309–312}, where they cite the *Prayer to the Altar (Oratio sacri altaris)*, attributed to Basil the Great.
- 197 See Petrus Diaconus et al., *Epistula ad episcopos*, p. 169^{279–283}, where is exposed a quotation from *Enchiridion to Laurentius*.
- 198 See Petrus Diaconus et al., *Epistula ad episcopos*, p. 160^{89–101}, where is exposed a quotation from *Malchion's Epistle against Paul of Samosata*.
- 199 See Petrus Diaconus et al., *Epistula ad episcopos*, p. 161^{105–118}, where is exposed a quotation from *On the Unity of Christ*.
- 200 Petrus Diaconus et al., *Epistula ad episcopos*, p. 170^{318–321}.
- 201 Petrus Diaconus et al., *Epistula ad episcopos*, pp. 171^{344–172}³⁷⁶.
- 202 Petrus Diaconus et al., *Epistula ad episcopos*, pp. 170^{323–171}³⁴².
- 203 Petrus Diaconus et al., *Epistula ad episcopos*, p. 164^{188–189}; McGregor and Fairbairn, *Fulgentius of Ruspe*, p. 34: “we embrace the letters of the blessed Leo.”
- 204 Maxentius, *Libellus fidei*, pp. 5–9; Pereira, *Reception*, pp. 533–535.
- 205 Maxentius, *Dialogus contra nestorianos* (11), p. 86^{347–348}.

But the monks, whom you [i.e., Pope Hormisdas] unjustly slander, they are aliens according to much from this accusation, so that they have never departed from catholic fellowship through the grace of God, it is permitted according to the right time, on account of several scandals springing in parts of the East, they have communicated with the western Churches.²⁰⁶

These words also show that the monks in Scythian monasteries (at least of some of them) were not isolated from the rest of the Christian world. They maintained certain relations with theological centres outside the province. This permitted them to be informed on the evolution of theological debates within the rest of the empire. Moreover, being aware of their role as defenders of the Orthodox faith, they tried to identify and to expose publicly any misinterpretations of the dogmas [“the new inventions of heretics” (*“haereticorum nouas adinventiones”*)²⁰⁷ as John Maxentius calls them], clarifying and defending the doctrine of the Catholic Church.²⁰⁸

Regarding the identification of the monasteries where these monks came from, there is no information to support a definite answer. Certain scholars consider the northern part of the province (the area of the now Niculițel village, Tulcea County, Romania).²⁰⁹ They based their point of view on the old time Christianity and the monastic tradition in that part of the province.²¹⁰ Others, referring to the Scythian coenobium where lived Dionysius Exiguus, who came from among the same monks, advanced two more hypotheses: either the city

206 Maxentius, *Responsio adversus epistolam*, p. 137⁴⁵⁰⁻⁴⁵⁴; Pereira, *Reception*, p. 556.

207 Maxentius, *Libellus fidei*, pp. 7⁶³–8⁶⁴; Pereira, *Reception*, p. 534.

208 The Scythian monks' purpose to clarify fully the Orthodox faith is expressed by John Maxentius using a quotation from Augustine of Hippo (*On the Trinity* 7.8): “Wherefore, in [speaking about] things we must not consider, as the most blessed Augustine says, what the usage of our own language either allows or does not allow, but what clearly appears to be the meaning of the things themselves.” (Maxentius, *Libellus fidei*, p. 9⁹⁰⁻⁹³; Pereira, *Reception*, p. 535).

209 Coman, *Scrittori bisericești*, p. 221; Vasile Iorgulescu, “Mărturia privind monahismul pe pământul românesc înainte de Sfântului Nicodim” [Testimonies concerning Monasticism on Romanian Territory before Saint Nicodemus of Tismana], *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, 101 (1983), nos. 3–4, p. 256.

210 The oldest monastery known in the region is that on Cetățuia Hill, dating to the second half of the 12th century or the first half of the 13th century—see Ionuț Holubeanu, *Monahismul în Dobrogea de la origini până în zilele noastre* [The Monasticism in Dobruja from the Origins to the Present] (Bucharest: Editura Universitară, 2020), pp. 281–282. As already shown (see above, subchapter 11.5: ‘The holy martyrs of Niculițel’), some monks may have lived also near the crypt of Niculițel in the 4th–6th centuries, but there is no proof that a monastery existed there.

of Tomi, or the territory leftwards of the Danube, in now Muntenia, somewhere next to the now Hârșova town (ancient Carsium, Constanța County, Romania).²¹¹ The latter hypothesis must be rejected, as Dionysius states clearly that the monastery around which he grew up was on the territory of Scythia, not outside the province.²¹² Less probable is the hypothesis of situating these monasteries in Tomi, as these monks had been in conflict with Metropolitan Paternus.

It is not excluded that their monasteries may have been situated in the southern part of the province, close to the city of Zaldapa (now Abrit, Bulgaria).²¹³ Vitalian is known to have originated from a place with this name, identified by certain scholars with the homonymous city in Scythia.²¹⁴ As already shown, some of the Scythian monks (certainly Leontius) were family relations with this count and it seems natural for them to have lived in a monastery not far from their native places. The remains of a monastery of that period were preserved near the now Dumbrăveni village (Romania), whereas of others from the same period are found in the valley near the now Petroșani village (Romania) and in the Sukha Reka and Dobrich Valleys in the north-eastern part of Bulgaria (see Map 9).²¹⁵

12.3.4 *The Doctrine of Salvation of the Scythian Monks*

The soteriological teaching of the Scythian monks leads to an important progress of understanding the evolution of the monasticism in Roman Scythia throughout the 5th century and of the level of spiritual living in the monasteries of the province at the beginning of the 6th.

The approach of the soteriological teaching as a debate issue by the Scythian monks was generated (most likely) by their reading of the treatise *On Grace*

211 Tomi: Drăgulin and Drăgulin, "Cercetări asupra operei," p. 25. Muntenia: Drăgulin and Drăgulin, "Cercetări asupra operei," p. 25; Drăgulin, "Prefețele cuviosului Dionisie," p. 78.

212 See above, subchapter 12.2: 'Dionysius Exiguus.'

213 Similarly, Moreau, "Les moines scythes," pp. 188, 197, and 200.

214 Barnea, "Perioada Dominatului," p. 412; Moreau, "Les moines scythes," pp. 191 and 193. On the other hand, Sergeï Torbatov [*Ukrepitelnata sistema na provintsiâ Skitiâ (Kraia na III–VII v.)*] [The Defence System of the Late Roman Province of Scythia (The End of the 3rd–the 7th Century A.D.)] (Veliko Tarnovo: Faber, 2002), p. 320], considers that Zaldava (not Zaldapa) was a small town in Moesia, not in Scythia, where Patriciolus was born, father of Vitalian, not the latter. See also John Robert Martindale, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman Empire*, 2 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), p. 1171 (Fl. Vitalianus 2).

215 See below, chapter 13: 'Monasteries on the territory between the Danube and the Black Sea during 4th–7th centuries AD.'

(*De gratia*) of Faustus of Riez (†c.490–495).²¹⁶ John Maxentius' assertions show that Possessor (an African bishop that took refuge in Constantinople) contested the orthodoxy of the theoanthropaschite formula invoking passages from *On Grace*, fact that aroused the Scythian monks' interest in this treatise.²¹⁷

After reading it, the Scythian monks concluded that it was impregnated by Pelagianism. This incited them, in parallel with the effort of promoting the theoanthropaschite formula, to request the condemnation by the Church of the Gallican bishop's book. Ever since 518/519, they had combated in their writings what they considered to be Faustus of Riez' Pelagian teachings and exposed the doctrine on the grace confessed by them.²¹⁸

Analyzing the Scythian monks' soteriological teaching, it is obvious that it is dependent on Augustine of Hippo's unconditional predestination theory. It can be summarized as follows:

- As a result of the original sin, human beings lost their free will, becoming slaves of sin. From that moment onward, their freedom had been a false one, as, without the help of the Holy Spirit, they cannot think, wish, or accomplish anything related to eternal life;²¹⁹
- Man can regain free will only helped by the holy grace, being able to believe in Christ, to think, and do what is really good;²²⁰
- The salvation is totally a gift of the Holy Spirit, not being conditioned at all by any previous merit of the person;²²¹
- The fallen humanity is a lump of perdition, of which some are saved by God's goodness and grace, whereas others are abandoned as a result of a right and secret judgment of the same God:

216 For this treatise, see Thomas A. Smith, *De Gratia: Faustus of Riez's Treatise on Grace and Its Place in the History of Theology* (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1990).

217 Maxentius, *Responsio adversus epistulam*, pp. 142⁶⁰¹–143⁶¹³ and 153⁸⁴⁸–860; Duchesne, *L'église au VI^e siècle*, p. 62; Pereira, *Reception*, pp. 559 and 565. On Possessor, see Wilhelm Ensslin, "Possessor," in *Paulys Realencyclopädie der classischen Altertumswissenschaft*, 22/1, eds. Konrat Ziegler and Georg Wissowa (Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, Stuttgart, 1953), pp. 859–860.

218 See Maxentius, *Libellus fidei*, pp. 23–25; Maxentius, *Capitula contra nestorianos*, p. 30^{36–48}; Maxentius, *Responsio adversus epistulam*, pp. 142–153; Petrus Diaconus et al., *Epistula ad episcopos*, pp. 165–172.

219 Maxentius, *Libellus fidei*, pp. 23^{373–376} and 24^{401–25}⁴⁰⁸; Petrus Diaconus et al., *Epistula ad episcopos*, pp. 166^{209–214} and 167^{242–247}.

220 Maxentius, *Responsio adversus epistulam*, p. 143^{619–621}, 624–626; Petrus Diaconus et al., *Epistula ad episcopos*, pp. 167^{235–252} and 169^{300–306}.

221 Maxentius, *Responsio adversus epistulam*, pp. 143⁶²⁹–144⁶³¹.

On the other hand, as a way of believing in and demonstrating the incomprehensible judgments of God, we say that from one lump of perdition some are saved by God's goodness and grace, while others are abandoned to a just and hidden judgment.²²²

The Scythian monks were fully aware of the fact that their soteriological teaching is centred on the idea of predestination. In the letter addressed to the African bishops, they also used the term 'predestination' (*praedestinatio*), when they exposed their belief on man's salvation.²²³ Moreover, they considered that this had always been the teaching of the Catholic Church, preached by the Saints Apostles, by Holy Fathers and permanently confessed both in Scythia and in the rest of the Christian world.²²⁴

As expected, their attempts to obtain the approval of the theologians in Constantinople on the predestination teaching were doomed to failure, this teaching being totally different from the soteriology and spirituality of the Christian East. This made John Maxentius assert: "also in this part, it would

222 Petrus Diaconus et al., *Epistula ad episcopos*, pp. 168²⁷⁴⁻²⁷⁷ and 169²⁸⁷⁻²⁸⁸; McGregor and Fairbairn, *Fulgentius of Ruspe*, p. 37: "*Nos autem incomprehensibilia credentes et demonstrantes iudicia dei, ex una massa perditionis alios saluari dicimus bonitate et gratia dei, alios iusto et occulto iudicio derelinqui.*" John Anthony McGuckin ("The 'Theopaschite Confession,'" pp. 245 and 247) asserted that there is a "veiled correction" of the Augustinian doctrine of predestination in this sentence by the fact that the Scythian monks refrain from speculating on the incomprehensible judgments of God. However, this kind of approach also exists in Augustine's last works on predestination and perseverance: "Thus, we have shown with sufficient clarity that the grace of God, both of the beginning [of faith] and of perseverance to the end, is not given according to our merits, but according to his [i.e., God] most secret, and at the same time most just, wise, and benevolent will, ..." [Augustine, *On the Gift of Perseverance* 13.33, in Saint Augustine, *Four Anti-Pelagian Writings: On Nature and Grace, On the Proceedings of Pelagius, On the Predestination of the Saints, On the Gift of Perseverance*, trans. John A. Mourant and William J. Collinge, introd. and notes William J. Collinge, (The Fathers of the Church. A New Translation) 86 (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1992), p. 300]; see also Rebecca Harden Weaver, *Divine Grace and Human Agency. A Study of the Semi-Pelagian Controversy*, 2nd ed., (North American Patristic Society. Patristic Monograph Series) 15 (Macon Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1998), pp. 50-67.

223 Petrus Diaconus et al., *Epistula ad episcopos*, p. 172³⁸¹⁻³⁸⁶; McGregor and Fairbairn, *Fulgentius of Ruspe*, p. 42: "*proiectus est quos contra praedestinationis sententiam scriptos esse non dubium est. In quibus non solum contra horum omnium sanctorum patrum, uerum etiam contra ipsius apostoli traditionem ueniens ...*" ("There is no doubt that he [i.e., Faustus of Riez] wrote these books in opposition to the idea of predestination, and in the text he opposes not only the tradition of all these holy fathers, but even that of the Apostle himself.").

224 Petrus Diaconus et al., *Epistula ad episcopos*, pp. 157⁷-158³¹ and 165¹⁹⁷⁻²⁰¹.

be apparent that the enemies of the grace of God—that is, the followers of Pelagius and Celestius—are hostile to us also.”²²⁵

In Rome, Pope Hormisdas refused to give them any answer regarding this issue, as in the case of the theanthropaschite formula. Nevertheless, questioned in a letter by Bishop Possessor on the correctness of Faustus of Riez’ assertions in the treatise *On Grace*, the Roman pontiff answered that the Gallic hierarch is not one of the fathers of the Church and, therefore, his theological opinions must be regarded as purely personal. At the same time, the pope recommended as normative on this topic mainly Augustine’s writings addressed to Prosper of Aquitaine and Hilary [i.e., *On the Predestination of the Saints* (*De praedestinatione sanctorum*) and *On the Gift of Perseverance* (*De dono perseverantiae*)]. In them, the former hierarch of Hippo Regius sustained the teaching on unconditional predestination. In this way, indirectly, the roman pontiff practically approved the soteriological teaching confessed by the Scythian monks, fact shown also by John Maxentius in the critical analysis of the pope’s response to Possessor.²²⁶

The Scythian monks received the firmest support in this issue from the African bishops exiled in Sardinia. Themselves supporters of the unconditional Augustinian predestination, they approved the soteriological teaching of the Scythian monks. As already shown, the Africans wrote them two letters (nos. 17 and 15), and their leader, Bishop Fulgentius of Ruspe, dedicated the treatise *The Truth about Predestination and Grace* to them. Through these sources, they assured the Scythian monks that the teaching on unconditional predestination is the official doctrine of the Catholic Church.

However, predestination (the divine unilateral predetermination of individuals’ eternal destinies) is neither apostolic, nor orthodox, as the Scythian monks believed, but it spread to Christianity through Augustine of Hippo’s writings.²²⁷

First, two aspects are of utmost importance for the case of the present analysis: (i.) when the predestination teaching entered Roman Scythia; (ii.) which were the causes leading to its acceptance and promotion among the Christians there.

The certain *terminus post quem* of the predestination teaching penetration into Roman Scythia can be established based on Augustine’s editorial

225 Maxentius, *Libellus fidei*, p. 23^{364–366}; Pereira, *Reception*, p. 540: “*etiam in hac parte, inimici gratiae dei—id est, Pelagii et Caelestii sectatores—nimium nobis infesti esse uidentur.*”

226 Maxentius, *Responsio adversus epistulam*, p. 142^{596–601}.

227 See Weaver, *Divine Grace and Human Agency*, pp. 37–67; Kenneth M. Wilson, *Augustine’s Conversion from Traditional Free Choice to “Non-free Free Will.” A Comprehensive Methodology* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2018), pp. 65–94 and 191–213.

activity. Given that he exposed the doctrine of unconditional predestination in *On the Predestination of the Saints* and *On the Gift of Perseverance*, published in 428–429,²²⁸ the dissemination of this teaching in Scythia took place after the year 429. Besides, the Scythian monks' writings of the 6th century show that they based their predestination theory especially on the treatise *On the Predestination of the Saints*.²²⁹

As *terminus ante quem* can be established as the years 518–519, when John Maxentius made public his *Chapters against the Nestorians*, in which he exposed for the first time the teaching on unconditional predestination. However, the acceptance of this teaching in the province must have been much older. An indication in this respect is the Scythian monks' conviction that it had always been confessed in their province: “*secundum quod nobis est traditum*” (“[the teaching on the divine grace] according to what has been handed down to us”).²³⁰ These words suggests that they did not know the anthropological and soteriological theological teaching from the time of Theotimus I of Tomi (c.390–c.407). As already shown, the latter revealed in his writings (like John Cassian) the importance of the human effort on the way to perfection, a teaching that is incompatible with that on predestination. In this case, the replacing of the traditional teaching on grace of the Church in Scythia must have taken place with at least a generation earlier (that of Bishop Peter) than that of John Maxentius. Predestination had certainly spread in the Danubian province long before the year 519.

Another important aspect for solving the issue is the reason that made Augustine conceive the teaching on predestination. Through his writings, the hierarch of Hippo Regius tried to combat the Pelagianism, which minimized the necessity of the divine grace for salvation. Unlike the West, Pelagianism was a secondary subject of debate in the eastern part of the Roman Empire.²³¹ However, the teaching that deeply troubled the Eastern Catholic Church and was associated to Pelagianism was Nestorianism. The relation between these two doctrines was reported in the West by John Cassian, in *On the Incarnation*

228 See Weaver, *Divine Grace and Human Agency*, pp. 37–69; Wilson, *Augustine's Conversion*, pp. 191–213.

229 See Maxentius, *Responsio adversus epistulam*, pp. 143–152; Pereira, *Reception*, pp. 560–565.

230 Petrus Diaconus et al., *Epistula ad episcopos*, p. 195^{198–199}; McGregor and Fairbairn, *Fulgentius of Ruspe*, p. 35.

231 See Duchesne, *L'église au VI^e siècle*, p. 62; Lionel Wickham, “Pelagianism in the East,” in *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick*, ed. Rowan Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 200–213.

of the Lord (*De incarnatione Domini*).²³² This was the treatise that drew attention in Rome to the similarity between Pelagian and Nestorian principles.²³³ For this reason, the Roman Church representatives at the First Council of Ephesus (431) requested and obtained the condemnation there of the Pelagianism, as well. The *General Synodal Letter* of 431 decrees excommunication against those who hold the opinions of Celestius, the major follower of Pelagius (canons 1 and 4),²³⁴ whereas the rival assembly under John of Antioch excommunicated Euchites (Messalians) who held the same views as Celestius and Pelagius.²³⁵ The connection between the Euchites and the Pelagians was explained by the common emphasis on human effort to attain serenity and the perfection of life.²³⁶

After the Council of Ephesus, Pelagianism (as much as it aroused interest) gradually disappeared from the Eastern theologians' agenda, the predominant topic of debate remaining Christology.²³⁷ All of these points suggest that measures against Pelagianism by promoting the doctrine of unconditional predestination could have been taken in an eastern province like Scythia only shortly after the First Council of Ephesus.

The metropolis of Tomi was represented at the First Council of Ephesus by Timothy (c.431). From 428, when the Nestorian crisis broke out in the imperial capital, and until the opening of the first council meeting (22 June 431),

232 Iohannes Cassianus, *De Incarnatione Domini contra Nestorium libri VII* 1.3.3–4, 4.1–3, v.1–2, 4, and VII.21.4, ed. Michael Petschenig, (*Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum*) 17/1 (Prague/Vienna: F. Tempsky; Leipzig: G. Freytag, 1888), pp. 240–241, 307–308, and 379; John Cassian, *The Seven Books of John Cassian on the Incarnation of the Lord, against Nestorius*, trans. Edgar C.S. Gibson, (*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*) 2/11 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1994), pp. 1407–1408, 1475–1476, and 1564. See also Eduard Schwartz, *Konzilstudien, I. Cassian und Nestorius, II. Über echte und unechte Schriften des Bischofs Proklos von Konstantinopel*, (*Schriften der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft in Straßburg*) 20 (Strasbourg: Trübner, 1914), pp. 1–18. The relation between Nestorianism and Pelagianism is noted also in an ironical poem of Prosper of Aquitaine (PL 51:153) and in a letter of Cyril of Alexandria to emperor Theodosius II (408–450) [Photius, *Bibliothèque* 54, 1, text and trans. René Henry (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1959), pp. 43–44]—see also Wickham, “Pelagianism,” pp. 204, 212–213 (no. 15), 210, and 213 (no. 31).

233 John Cassian wrote *On the Incarnation of the Lord* at the request of archdeacon Leo (the future Pope Leo I).

234 See Tanner, *Decrees*, pp. 63–64.

235 *ACO*, I/1.3, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1927), p. 42.

236 Wickham, “Pelagianism,” p. 212, n. 5.

237 Louis Duchesne, *Early History of the Christian Church from its Foundation to the End of the Fifth Century*, 3, trans. Claude Jenkins (London: John Murray, 1960), pp. 140–218; M.Th. Disdier, “Le pélagianisme au concile d'Éphèse,” *Échos d'Orient* 30 (1931), no. 163, pp. 314–333; Wickham, “Pelagianism,” pp. 200–213.

no reaction of this hierarch had been known. Through this passive attitude, Timothy differs from his predecessors to the see of Tomi who were active in theological debates, firmly defending the Orthodox faith: in 369, Vetrano (c.367–c.374) stood up to the Semi-Arian Emperor Valens (364–378), Gerontius (c.381) stood out at the First Council of Constantinople (381) as a model for Orthodox faith, whereas Theotimus I reproved Epiphanius of Salamis (†403) for condemning Origen's writings.²³⁸ Timothy's silence is all the more unusual as he could have reacted to the serious statements of the Nestorians. Toward the end of the year 429, Dorotheus of Marcianopolis (in Moesia Secunda, the only Roman province neighbouring Scythia), preaching in the cathedral in Constantinople in front of the Christians gathered at the divine service, anathematized all those confessing that Saint Mary is the 'Mother of God' ('Θεοτόκος').²³⁹ According to a contemporary testimony, these words troubled profoundly the Christians in the church and had a huge echo in the whole Eastern and Western Church.²⁴⁰ Nevertheless, the church historians (Sozomen and Socrates) who reported the actions of Timothy's predecessors, even if contemporary of Timothy, did not mention any reaction of his to the scandalous statements of the metropolitan in Moesia Secunda.

It could certainly be supposed that Timothy disapproved of Dorotheus' words, but that his reaction was overlooked and remained unknown to contemporary historians. Nevertheless, the attitude of the metropolitan of Tomi at Ephesus suggests another situation. In the first part of the council, Timothy appears in the group of Nestorius' supporters. Together with sixty other hierarchs, he signed a protest letter addressed to Cyril of Alexandria in which they asked him to postpone the opening of the sessions until the arrival of the bishops from the diocese of Oriens.²⁴¹ Dorotheus of Marcianopolis was also one of the signatories of the protest letter.²⁴² This means that the hierarch of Tomi was in his company at that time, despite the serious incident in 429. Consistent with this position, Timothy also refused to participate in the first meeting of the council.²⁴³

238 On Vetrano, see above, subchapter 11.3: 'Saint Vetrano of Tomi (c.367–c.374)'. On Gerontius, see above, 'Introduction.' On Theotimus I, see above, subchapter 11.4: 'Saint Theotimus I of Tomi (c.390–c.407).'

239 Cyrillus Alexandrinus, *Epistola II*, in *ACO*, I/1.5, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter), 1927, p. 11^{9–10}.

240 See Norman Russel, *Cyril of Alexandria* (London: Taylor and Francis Group, 2000), p. 36.

241 *ACO*, I/4, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1922–1923), p. 28 (no. 15).

242 *ACO*, I/4, p. 28 (no. 12).

243 The name of Timothy of Tomi is not mentioned in any of the extant versions of the attendance list on 22 June, see *ACO*, I/1.2, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter,

Two other hierarchs arrived in Ephesus as supporters of Nestorius (Metropolitans Theodotus of Ancyra in Galatia Prima and Acacius of Melitene in Armenia Secunda) had an attitude different from that of Timothy. After hearing the teachings of the capital's archbishop at its residence of Ephesus, Theodotus and Acacius separated immediately from him, did not sign the protest letter addressed to Cyril,²⁴⁴ participated in the synodal meeting on 22 June, and, within it, told everyone about Nestorius' teachings, that they had heard themselves from his mouth.²⁴⁵

Timothy eventually changed his attitude, signing the synodal documents, including the condemnation of Nestorius.²⁴⁶ Thus, he saved his reputation as a catholic and could have maintained the episcopal seat. Moreover, it can be supposed that, on his return to Scythia, he was preoccupied with the implementation of the dogmatic decisions of Ephesus to eliminate any possible Nestorian influence (or supposed Pelagian) in Scythia. From this moment onward, any other hesitation on his part could no longer be excused.

There is no documentary evidence of the Pelagian heresy in Scythia.²⁴⁷ The information on Theotimus I reveals the existence of the eastern soteriology there at the beginning of the 5th century. However, this doctrine could create confusions among those uninitiated. This happened in the Western Church with Prosper of Aquitaine, who, in his treatise *Against the Conferencer (Contra collatorem)*, denounced as Pelagian John Cassian's teaching on the grace.²⁴⁸ The substitution of the traditional soteriology of the Church in Scythia for Augustinian doctrine suggests that Timothy fell in the same error. In fact, his behaviour during the Nestorian crisis proves that he was not a profound and spiritually advanced theologian. Very likely, considering the doctrine on grace of his Church as Pelagian, he eliminated it, promoting the Augustinian one. This approach was facilitated by the fact that, being the only bishop of the province, he had all Christians there in obedience (presbyters, monks, and ordinary believers).

1927), pp. 3–7; *ACO*, I/2, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1925–1926), pp. 27–31; *ACO*, I/3, ed. Eduard Schwartz (Berlin/Leipzig: De Gruyter, 1929), pp. 52–56.

244 The name of Theodotus of Ancyra and that of Acacius of Melitene do not appear among the signatures at the end of the protest letter—see *ACO*, I/4, pp. 28–30.

245 Russel, *Cyril of Alexandria*, pp. 46 and 50.

246 *ACO*, I/1.2, p. 62 (no. 172).

247 See Nelu Zugravu, *Erezii și schisme la Dunărea Mijlocie și de Jos în mileniul I* [Heresies and Schisms on the Middle and Lower Danube in the First Millennium] (Iași: Presa Bună, 1999), *passim*; Zugravu, “Studiu introductiv,” pp. 106–126.

248 See Weaver, *Divine Grace and Human Agency*, pp. 121–131.

The reaction of the Scythian monks of that time is not known. It may be supposed that such a radical transformation of theological thinking could not have been accepted without a certain opposition, at least from some of them. A possible indication in this respect could be the case of archimandrite Carosus, former disciple of Theotimus I, who left Scythia and settled in Constantinople (see above). The reason for his departure is unknown, but it could be explained by Timothy's actions after Ephesus. It is possible for other Scythian monks to have left the province at that time as well, heading toward other monasteries of the East. However, it is certain that the approach of the metropolitan of Tomi was successful, as one of the main preoccupations of the Scythian theologians after 431 was to combat Nestorianism and Pelagianism (by supporting the doctrine on predestination).

There is no preserved information on when and who recommended Augustine's writings to Timothy as normative for the soteriological doctrine of the Catholic Church and suitable for combating Pelagianism. He was most probably a western theologian. Both the language (Latin) in which they were written and their spread to the West, and not East, support this idea. Moreover, Augustinian predestination was never accepted by the eastern Churches, Scythia being an exception from this point of view.²⁴⁹ The historical context in which Timothy could become a supporter of this teaching (the First Council of Ephesus) suggests that his advisers were, most probable, the papal legates at the council themselves. Mention must be made of the fact that the council did not debate Pelagianism in detail.²⁵⁰ In these conditions, the papal legates were expected to provide detailed information about this heresy and were the only ones who could have recommended the western remedy against it. Being a Latin-speaking bishop, most likely, Timothy could have communicated directly with the Roman legates.

Maintaining the Augustinian soteriology by theologians in the province until the beginning of the 6th century and the belief of the Scythian monks at that time that this had always been the teaching of the Catholic Church

249 The teaching on predestination may have spread also in the province of Moesia Secunda, at least in its monasteries that were related to Scythia. This supposition is based on the observation that, in the second half of the 5th century, there was a consensus regarding the doctrine between theologians in Scythia and those in Moesia Secunda. An example in this respect is the similar position adopted by Theotimus II of Tomi and the hierarchs in Moesia Secunda during the investigation around *Encyclia* (457–458)—see *ACO*, II/5, pp. 31–32. Moreover, Moesia Secunda had been even more affected by Nestorianism, which imposed taking severe measures to eradicate it after the council in 431.

250 Wickham, "Pelagianism," p. 201.

demonstrate that Timothy's initiative was supported also by his successors in the episcopal see, at least until Paternus.

By promoting Augustine's theological treatises after 431, the Latin theological literature eventually became more important within the theological education in Scythia than Greek, especially in monasteries.²⁵¹ This change must have been quite easily accepted in a bilingual province such as Scythia. Still, one of its consequences was that, at the end of the 5th century, most of the theologians there were no longer capable of understanding (at a satisfactory level) the Greek language of the eastern treatises. An example in this respect is Metropolitan Peter of Tomi's request addressed to Dionysius Exiguus to send him a translation of the Synodal Letter in 430, and not a copy of the original letter (in Greek). Moreover, Scythian monks arrived in Rome asked their fellow-countryman to translate into Latin the two letters (nos. 45 and 46) of Cyril of Alexandria. Dionysius himself promised that he would try to translate for them into Latin other works of the Alexandrian bishop. Therefore, if at the beginning of the 5th century Metropolitan Theotimus I of Tomi read Origen's writings in original and wrote his theological treatises in Greek, at the end of the same century, Scythian monks read the treatises of Augustine of Hippo and composed theirs in Latin. Nevertheless, Greek remained the liturgical language of the Church in Scythia.²⁵²

This soteriological incident permits advances in understanding the level of the spiritual experience of the monks in Roman Scythia and of their relations with the theological centres outside the province during the 5th century. As already shown, Dionysius Exiguus left a laudatory description of the Istro-Pontic monasticism. He acknowledged the local monks as educated theologians ("even if simple by their words, they were not ignorant in science"), true examples of faith, and firm defenders of the Catholic doctrine. He also revealed their pure living and praised their ascetic efforts. And still, if this was the case, why did these theologians not understand the way in which God's grace works in the human nature in the process of its sanctification?

251 The analysis of John Maxentius's quotes and mentions to Augustine's ideas revealed that the Scythian monk had access to the writings of the African bishop and not just to passages reproduced in the patristic collections that circulated at that time—Altaner, *Kleine patristische Schriften*, pp. 490–493; David R. Maxwell, "What Was 'Wrong' with Augustine? The Sixth-Century Reception (or Lack Thereof) of Augustine's Christology," in *In the Shadow of the Incarnation: Essays on Jesus Christ in the Early Church in Honor of Brian E. Daley, S.J.*, ed. Peter W. Martens (Notre Dame, Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2008), pp. 215–216.

252 On the liturgical language of the Church in Roman Scythia, see above, 'Introduction.'

In his writings on divine grace, John Cassian revealed two important aspects: (i.) The incompatibility between erroneous soteriological doctrines (such as Pelagianism and the teaching on predestination) with the authentic Christian spirituality; (ii.) The most profound way in which a Christian can thoroughly and deeply understand the collaboration between the divine grace and human will. Starting from the example of some of the pagan philosophers who wished and tried to obtain chastity, Cassian pointed to the fact that they received only:

some particle of chastity, viz. continence of the flesh, by which they could restrain their lust from carnal intercourse: but this internal purity of mind and continual purity of body they could not attain, I will not say, in act, but even in thought.²⁵³

This failure was caused by the absence of the work of God's sanctifying grace, the only thing that could perfect their efforts. In the case of the Christian monk, continued Cassian, the supreme purpose of asceticism must be not the restraint of the lust, but reaching the internal purity of mind and continual purity of body. This supposes healing of vices (spiritual diseases or principal faults) and crowning with virtues, by human efforts and the work of the sanctifying grace:

we certainly must not think that the philosophers attained such chastity of soul, as is required of us, on whom it is enjoined that not fornication only, but uncleanness be not so much as named among us.²⁵⁴

Moreover, John Casian suggested that he who managed to advance on the way of virtues deeply understands the way in which God's grace sanctifies human nature. He feels inside the cooperation of his will with the divine grace in the process of personal salvation. Thus, he is out of danger of falling into any of the heresies concerning the way of achieving salvation: "... all the Catholic fathers ... have taught perfection of heart not by empty disputes of words, but in deed and act, ..." ²⁵⁵ In a similar way, in his preface to *Institutes*, Cassian asserted that, in monastic life:

253 Iohannes Cassianus, *Conlationes XXIIII* XIII.5,2-3, ed. Michael Petschenig, (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum) 13/2 (Vienna: C. Gerold's Sohn, 1886), p. 366²⁻⁶, 13-18 (hereafter cited as *Conlationes*); John Cassian, *The Conferences*, trans. Edgar C.S. Gibson, (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers) 2/11 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1994), p. 1073.

254 *Conlationes* XIII.5.2, pp. 365²⁹-366²; trans., p. 1073.

255 *Conlationes* XIII.18.4, p. 395¹⁹⁻²¹; trans., p. 1099.

the method of these things cannot possibly be taught or understood or kept in the memory by idle meditation and verbal teaching, for it depends entirely upon experience and practice. And, as these things cannot be taught save by one who has had experience of them, so they cannot even be learnt or understood except by one who has tried with equal care and pains to grasp them.²⁵⁶

The information above shows that the acceptance of the Pelagian doctrine or of predestination (as in the case of the Scythian monks) proves a spiritual insensibility due to the lack of a real engagement on the way of healing from vices and reaching virtues. In this case, the virulence proved by Scythian monks defending the teaching on unconditional predestination is the proof of their low level of spiritual experience (or—in other words—of their spiritual superficiality). This aspect, on the one hand, and their strict ascetic life (certified by Dionysius Exiguus), on the other hand, reveal that they did not manage to overcome the first phase of asceticism, when the inexperienced Christian mainly concentrates on external rigorous efforts (fasting, prayers, vigil, physical work), losing the final purpose of all these (healing from vices and achieving virtues).

Relating this evidence to the other extant testimonies regarding monastic life in Roman Scythia, the conclusion is that, after the rule of Theotimus I, under Timothy, monastic life in the province faced a process of spiritual decline. Its followers left the empirical theology, based on the hesychastic spiritual experience, and embraced that of a scholastic type, dominated by human logic-based axioms, unverified by experience. Thus, the intense human-God relationship (promoted by Theotimus I of Tomi) was abandoned and replaced by a pietist experience, centred on external asceticism (probably physical work, strict observance of church rules, concentration on the monk's external behaviour). In this context, the implication in charitable activities (such as orphans care and education), needed also due to the hardships caused by barbarian attacks and robberies in the province, increased (likely) more and more, becoming an important part of the monks' daily activities.

Regarding John Maxentius' surprise at the refusal of the theologians in Constantinople to accept the teaching on predestination, it reveals the long

256 Iohannes Cassianus, *De Institutis coenobiorum et de octo principalium vitiorum remediis libri XII* praef.5 (hereafter cited as *Institutes*), ed. Michael Petschenig, (Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum) 17/1 (Prague/Vienna: F. Tempsky; Leipzig: G. Freytag, 1888), p. 5⁷⁻¹⁰; John Cassian, *The Twelve Books on the Institutes of the Coenobia, and the Remedies for the Eight Principal Faults*, trans. Edgar C.S. Gibson, (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers) 11/11 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1994), p. 401.

isolation of the monastic communities in Scythia from those in the rest of the Christian East until that moment. The Scythian monks were close to their brothers in the West, and not to those in the East, in terms of soteriological doctrine. This isolation must not be interpreted as an interruption of any relations of theologians in Roman Scythia with those in the rest of the eastern centres. Against such an assertion stand the participation of the hierarchs of Tomi and their suffragans in the councils and synods organized in the middle of the 5th century and the good knowledge by the Scythian monks of the new Christological teachings circulating in Constantinople and the rest of the Christian East. However, it reveals the absence of stronger (more profound) relations between the centres in Scythia and those in the rest of the East, involving common living and sharing spiritual experiences. Such an interruption was likely also determined by the linguistic barrier that appeared between the monks in Scythia and the rest of the eastern monastic centres (excepting those in Moesia Secunda).²⁵⁷

In conclusion, the year 431 marks the beginning of a period of decline in the spirituality of the Church in Roman Scythia. It was marked by the abandonment of the empirical theology in favour of the scholastic one. The traditional soteriological doctrine of the local Church was replaced by that of Augustine of Hippo. The promoter of this change was, most likely, Timothy of Tomi who, after the First Council of Ephesus, confused the local teaching on grace with Pelagianism and promoted the Augustinian soteriology. At the same time, by the spread of the African bishop's writings in the province, Latin was promoted in the theological education to the detriment of Greek, the latter remaining as a liturgical language.

12.4 The Internal Organization of Scythian Monasteries

As already presented, the Prefaces dedicated to his fellow-countrymen (monks John and Leontius, as well as Metropolitan Peter of Tomi) prove that Dionysius Exiguus had grown in one of the monasteries of the province, where the future hierarch himself took care of him. The acceptance of children in monasteries is a strong argument in favour of the hypothesis that Basil the Great's monastic

²⁵⁷ The use of Latin in the church administration in Moesia Secunda in the 5th–6th centuries is proved by the writing of the response letter to emperor Leo I during the investigation around *Encyclia* (457–458) by the hierarchs of the province in this language—see *ACO*, II/5, p. 32^{32–33}. Also, at the Home Synod of 518, Bishop Amantius of Nicopolis ad Istrum was the only signatory of the synodal documents who used Latin—see *ACO*, III, p. 66^{1–2} (no. 21).

rule was applied in the coenobia of the province. Unlike the other monastic life leaders in the Christian East, the great Cappadocian hierarch recommends in his *Detailed Rule* the reception of children in monasteries, basing this response on excerpts from the Holy Bible:

Since the Lord says: 'Let the little children come to me' [Mark 10:14] and the Apostle [Paul] praises him 'who from infancy' had learned 'the sacred Scriptures' [2 Tim. 3:15] and again, instructs that 'children be brought up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord' [Eph. 6:4], we deem that any time, from the earliest age, is suitable for receiving applicants to instruction and the fear of the Lord. ... Children bereft of parents we take in of our own accord, thus becoming fathers of orphans after the example of Job's zeal [cf. Job 29:12].²⁵⁸

The acceptance of children was not recommended in the monasteries of Egypt. This is shown by some apothegms exposed in *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, where monks are directly or indirectly exhorted to avoid children: "Isaac the Theban used to say to the brothers, 'Do not bring children here, because four churches at Scete have become deserted because of children';"²⁵⁹ and: "Maintain no friendship with a woman, with a child, or with heretics;"²⁶⁰ and also:

Concerning the desolation of Scete, he [i.e. Macarius the Egyptian] would say to the brothers, 'When you see a cell built near to the marsh, know that its desolation is near. When you see trees, it is at the door. When you see children, take your sheepskins and get away.'²⁶¹

There are apothegms that attest children living near the monks, but the context of the presentation shows that these were exceptions.²⁶² The main reasons for this attitude toward children were the opinion that they troubled the

258 Basilius Magnus, *Regulae fusius tractatae* 15,1, PG 31:952; trans., pp. 199–200.

259 *The Book of the Elders: Sayings of the Desert Fathers. The Systematic Collection*, trans. John Wortley, foreword Bernard Flusin (Collegeville, Minnesota: Cistercian Publications, 2012), p. 153, no. 44.

260 *The Book of the Elders*, p. 13, no. 34.

261 *The Book of the Elders*, p. 319, no. 16.

262 See *The Book of the Elders*, p. 67, no. 25: "They used to say of one elder that he brought his son, a child not yet weaned, when he came down to Scete; [the child] did not know what a woman was. ...;" see also next note.

silence necessary to prayer²⁶³ and the risk for the monks of falling into the sin of pedophilia.²⁶⁴

As shown by John Cassian's words, in Egypt, the care for infants, as well as for the other social categories in need (old people, widows, sick people, poor families, imprisoned) was manifested in another way, by directing revenue that exceeded the necessities of the monasteries toward these groups: "whatever is not wanted for the sacred purposes of the monastery, may be distributed at the will of the Abbot either among the prisons, or in the guest-chamber or in the infirmary or to the poor."²⁶⁵ Neither in Palestine, nor in Syria the practice of raising small children in monasteries is known.

Regarding the moment when the monastic rule of Basil could have been implemented in the Scythian monasteries, this likely occurred quite early. Basil the Great wrote the monastic rule together with Gregory of Nazianzus during their time spent in solitude not far from Neocaesarea on the Iris (c.356–365).²⁶⁶ Basil's fame as a defender of the Catholic faith and the echo of his accomplishments in Caesarea contributed to the spread of his monastic rule. This accounts for the early translation into Latin of his Small Asketikon (become part of the Great Asketikon) by Rufinus of Aquileia (c.349–411) (*Instituta Basili/Regula Basili*). Moreover, back from 363, Basil's monastic rule was approved by Pope Liberius (352–366) and, later, by Pope Damasus I (366–384), in 366, as well as by Pope Leo I (440–461), in 456.²⁶⁷ This is how it became famous throughout the whole Christian world.

Basil's monastic rule could have spread to Scythia back from the time of Vetrano. It would mean the years 370s, corresponding to John Cassian's adolescence. As already shown, the more and more intense relations between Tomi and Caesarea at that time created a favorable context for the circulation of the ecclesiastical type of information between the two provinces. The worsening of the social problems in Scythia due to the refuge there of Christians from trans-Danubian Gothia during the persecution of Athanaric and, later, to

263 *The Book of the Elders*, pp. 294–295, no. 23: "Some brothers visited a holy elder living in a desert place, and they found some children outside his monastery ... they said to him, 'Abba, how do you tolerate these children?' ... 'If I cannot stand this little [disturbance], how will I withstand severe temptations if they come upon me?'"

264 *The Book of the Elders*, p. 59, no. 3: "Abba John Colobos said, 'He who stuffs himself and speaks with a child has already indulged in *porneia* with him in the mind.'"

265 *Conlationes* XVIII.7.6, p. 515^{8–12}; trans., p. 1231.

266 Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, 3 (Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, 1986), p. 205.

267 J. Besse, "Basile (Règle et moines de saint)," in *Dictionnaire de Théologie Catholique*, 2/1, eds. A. Vacant et al. (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1910), col. 455–456; Anna M. Silvas, "From Edessa to Cassino: The Passage of Basil's Asketikon to the West," *Vigiliae Christianae* 56 (2002), no. 3, pp. 247–259; Silvas, *The Asketikon*, pp. 102–129.

the troubles appeared in the region after the defeat of the Roman army by the Goths at Hadrianopolis (9 August 378) could have been other factors that may have led to the implementation of this monastic rule. Due to it, monks could provide additional help in solving the social issues that emerged. Moreover, given Vetranio's profile (zealous defender of the Catholic faith), it seems unlikely for him to have been indifferent to the situation of the monasteries in Scythia. Furthermore, Sozomen's account of this aspect shows that it was due to the firmness proved when Vetranio guided the Christians in his see that they remained faithful to the Nicene creed.²⁶⁸ In this case, the Tomitan hierarch must have shown a special concern also with the monks in the province, transferring them under his direct supervision (as recommended by Basil's rule), in order to prevent any centrifugal tendencies that could have appeared among them.

The superior chronological limit of the moment when Basil's rule was brought to Scythia may be considered the end of Metropolitan Theotimus I's episcopal leadership.²⁶⁹ As already shown, this hierarch came from among the monks and was concerned with their spiritual progress. Achieving this last-mentioned goal involved a good internal organization of monasteries, as well.

Regarding the rule observed in Scythian monasteries before the adoption of Basil's rule, it is supposed to have been established by the founder or leader of every coenobium.

12.5 The Convent of Samuel. Abbot Paul. Deacon Zoticus

Another piece of documentary information was preserved from the second quarter of the 6th century, which was related to the situation of Istro-Pontic monasticism. At the Home Synod of 536, which took place at the time of Patriarch Menas (536–552), several monks and hegumens from Constantinople, Palestine, and Syria sent a letter to Emperor Justinian, condemning certain heretics and schismatics, such as Severus of Antioch, Peter of Apamea, and

²⁶⁸ Sozomenos, *Historia ecclesiastica* VI.21.2–6, in *Kirchengeschichte*, ed. Christian Hansen Günther, (Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller) 4 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1995), p. 263^{16–18}; trans. Chester D. Hartranft, (Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers) 11/2 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1979), p. 799: "Indeed, it appears that in all the Churches which were governed by brave men, the people did not deviate from their former opinions. It is said that this was the cause of the firmness with which the Scythians adhered to their faith." See also above, subchapter 11.3: 'Saint Vetranio of Tomi (c.367–c.374).'

²⁶⁹ See above, subchapter 11.4: 'Saint Theotimus I of Tomi (c.390–c.407).'

Zoora. Among the signatories of the document is a certain hegumen Paul, who gave his adhesion through his deacon, Zoticus. At that time, Paul was leading Samuel's monastery and his signature appears in the following form: "Paul by the mercy of God presbyter and hegumen of the monastery of Samuel, [located] near the Scythian (κατὰ τὸν Σκύθην), I approved, signing through the deacon Zoticus."²⁷⁰

A monastery of Samuel is also mentioned in a document of 518. It is a memoir submitted by the leaders of many monasteries in Constantinople and its neighbourhood to the participants in the Home Synod of that year. In the signatories' list at the end of the memoir the adhesion of a certain hegumen Elijah, for whom monk Cosmas signed, also appears:

Elijah by the mercy of God priest and archimandrite of the monastery of Samuel, that [Samuel] of holy memory, which is in Sykai, approving these documents, I signed by the hand of the monk Cosmas; since I did not see the documents, I took the precious cross in my own hand.²⁷¹

The words 'κατὰ τὸν Σκύθην,' used in the signature of 536 for the location of the monastery of Samuel have been interpreted in different ways. Raymond Janin stated that the documents in 518 and 536 mentioned the same monastery, whose founder was a certain Samuel (Σαμουήλ) or Samuelios (Σαμουήλιος). From his point of view, this place of worship was situated in the suburb of Sykai (now Galata, in Istanbul, Turkey) of Constantinople. The proof in this regard are the details in the signature of 518 ('ἐν Συκαίς'). Concerning the words 'κατὰ τὸν Σκύθην' in deacon Zoticus' signature, Janin excluded the possibility for them to be the result of a copyist's error for 'ἐν ταῖς Συκαίς.' He also rejected the possibility of any relation between this 'ὁ Σκύθης' and a place called 'τὰ Σκύλα' (in some documents mentioned as 'τὰ Σκύθη' or 'τὰ Σκύθα'), because the latter ('τὰ Σκύλα'/'τὰ Σκύθη'/'τὰ Σκύθα') was not situated in the suburb of Sykai, but close to the Constantinopolitan hippodrome. Finally, the French scholar wonders if 'ὁ Σκύθης' could refer to a part of the suburb of Sykai or a

²⁷⁰ ACO, III, p. 35¹¹⁻¹²: "Παῦλος ἐλέει θεοῦ πρεσβύτερος καὶ ἡγούμενος μονῆς Σαμουήλ κατὰ τὸν Σκύθην ὑπογράψας ἐδείθην διὰ Ζωτικῆ διακόνου." Similarly, p. 46²¹⁻²²: "Παῦλος ἐλέει θεοῦ πρεσβύτερος καὶ ἡγούμενος μονῆς Σαμουήλ κατὰ τὸν Σκύθην ὑπογράψας διὰ Ζωτικῆ διακόνου ἐπέδωκα" ("Paul by the mercy of God presbyter and hegumen of the monastery of Samuel, [located] near the Scythian, I approved, signing through deacon Zoticus").

²⁷¹ ACO, III, p. 71²³⁻²⁶: "Ἡλίας ἐλέει θεοῦ πρεσβύτερος καὶ ἀρχιμανδρίτης μονῆς Σαμουήλ τοῦ τῆς ὁσίας μνήμης τοῦ ὄντος ἐν Συκαίς ἐπιδοῦς τούσδε τοὺς λιβέλλους ὑπέγραψα διὰ χειρὸς Κοσμᾶ μοναχοῦ διὰ τὸ ἐμὲ γράμματα μὴ εἰδέναι προτάξας τῇ ἰδίᾳ μου χειρὶ τὸν τίμιον σταυρόν."

monument there, even if he considered that, in the absence of any other information, the elucidation of this dilemma is not possible.²⁷²

Emilian Popescu considers that hegumen Paul of 536 was the leader of a Scythian monks' monastery in Constantinople. From his point of view, the presence of the Scythian monks there at that time supports the existence of a Scythian coenobium in or around the imperial capital. Nevertheless, the Romanian scholar admits the unclear meaning of the words 'κατὰ τὸν Σκύθην' and points to the fact that the name of Scythia province must have been rendered as a feminine, not as a masculine noun.²⁷³

Ioan Aurel Pop states that monk Zoticus (in reality, Paul) was hegumen of a monastery in Scythia.²⁷⁴

We consider that Samuel's monastery in 536 was most probably the same as that of 518, as sustained by Raymond Janin. In this case, based on monk Cosmas' specification ('ἐν Συκαίς'), it was situated in the suburb of Sykai in Constantinople. The possibility for this Constantinopolitan monastery to have belonged to the Scythians, as Emilian Popescu sustained, or, at least, to have been situated close to one of theirs, must not be totally rejected. Moreover, there were many national monasteries, held by the Syrians (one), the Cretans (one), the Bessi (Thracian population in the Balkans) (one), the Lycaonians (inhabitants of Lycaonia province) (two), the Egyptians (one), and by the Latin-speaking Western Christians (five) in the imperial capital at that time (the first half of the 6th century). They are mentioned in documents related to the Home Synods of 518 and 536, whereas that of the Egyptians, back from the first half of the 5th century. To be noticed in the case of all is that their name is not related to that of the province or the region where their founders had come from (Syria, Crete, Dacia Mediterranea, Lycaonia etc.), but to the nationality of those who possessed them (Syrians, Cretans, Bessi, Lycaonians, etc.): 'μονῆς τῶν Σύρων' ['(hegumen) of the monastery of the Syrians'],²⁷⁵ 'μονῆς τῶν Κρητικῶν' ('monastery of the Cretans'),²⁷⁶ 'μονῆς τῶν Βέσσων' ('monastery

272 Raymond Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'Empire Byzantin*, 1/3 (Paris: Institut français d'études byzantines, 1953), p. 466.

273 Popescu, "Frühes mönchtum," p. 231, n. 58.

274 Ioan Aurel Pop, "Viața bisericească și monahismul de rit bizantin pe teritoriul României până la 1300" [Ecclesiastical Life and Byzantine Rite Monasticism on the Territory of Romania until 1300], in *Monahismul ortodox românesc* (see above, n. 45), 1, p. 351.

275 *ACO*, III, pp. 34¹⁵⁻¹⁶ (no. 22), 44³¹⁻³² (no. 8), 145⁵⁻⁶ (no. 59), 165⁶ (no. 59), and 172²³ (no. 16). See also Raymon Janin, "Les monastères nationaux et provinciaux à Byzance (Constantinople et environs)," *Échos d'Orient* 32 (1933), no. 172, p. 430.

276 *ACO*, III, pp. 36¹⁴⁻¹⁵ (no. 61), 47²²⁻²³ (no. 63), 145¹¹⁻¹² (no. 62), 165⁸ (no. 61), and 172²⁶ (no. 19); Janin, "Les monastères nationaux," p. 431.

of the Bessi'),²⁷⁷ 'μονῆς τῶν Λυκαόνων' ('monastery of the Lycaonians'),²⁷⁸ 'μονῆς τῶν Ρωμαίων/Romanorum' ('monastery of the Romans'),²⁷⁹ 'μονῆς τῶν Αἰγυπτίων' ('monastery of the Egyptians').²⁸⁰ If the founders of a monastery were the inhabitants of a city, the name of the settlement was established by reference to them: 'μονῆς Ἀντιοχειανῶν' [(hegumen) of the monastery of the Antiochenes'].²⁸¹

In this case, if the signature of Samuel's monastery representative in 536 had mentioned a monastery of the Scythians or one situated in its neighbourhood, it would have been natural to use the Genitive plural of the ethnonym 'Σκυθης,' either with the form 'κατὰ τὴν μονὴ τῶν Σκυθῶν,' or with a simplified one, similar to that, 'κατὰ τὴν Σκυθῶν.'

Another possibility would have been for the mention of the monastery to have been made by reference to its founder's name. Such a situation appears in the case of the Egyptian Constantinopolitan monastery: "πρεσβύτερος καὶ ἀρχιμανδρίτης μονῆς Θεοδώρου Αἰγυπτίου" ("presbyter and archimandrite of the monastery of Theodor the Egyptian").²⁸² In this case, it would have been expected that instead of 'κατὰ τὸν Σκύθην,' it would appear either the form 'κατὰ τὴν μονὴν Σκύθου,' or 'κατὰ τὴν Σκύθου,' or a more extensive one, mentioning also the founder's name [for example, 'κατὰ τὴν μονὴν Λεοντίου Σκύθου' ('near the monastery of Leontius the Scythian')].

To conclude, the monastery of Samuel was most probably situated in the suburb of Sykai in Constantinople. Regarding the formula 'κατὰ τὸν Σκύθην,' used by deacon Zoticus in 536, it seems unlikely that it indicated the Scythian origin of this monastery or its proximity to a Scythian monks' coenobium.

277 ACO, III, p. 34²⁹⁻³⁰ (no. 29); Janin, "Les monastères nationaux," p. 431; Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique*, pp. 68 and 168.

278 ACO, III, pp. 35¹⁷⁻¹⁸ (no. 44), 36¹²⁻¹³ (no. 60), 47²⁰⁻²¹ (no. 62), 70³¹⁻³² (no. 40), 71⁴⁻⁶ (no. 46), 129^{13, 30} (nos. 26 and 43), 144¹³⁻¹⁴ (no. 44), 157^{18, 35} (nos. 26 and 43), 164^{16, 33} (nos. 26 and 43), 172³⁹ (no. 32), and 173¹² (no. 49); Janin, "Les monastères nationaux," pp. 431-432.

279 ACO, III, pp. 33^{26-27, 30-31} (nos. 8 and 10), 36⁶⁻⁹ (nos. 57 and 58), 44³⁷⁻³⁸ (no. 11), 47^{12-15, 68-69} (nos. 58-59 and 68), 48³⁸⁻³⁹ (no. 89), 69¹⁹⁻²⁰ (no. 18), 71⁷⁻⁹ (no. 47), 128^{30, 33} (nos. 4 and 7), 129³⁴ (no. 47), 142^{10-11, 16-17} (nos. 5 and 8), 144²³⁻²⁴ (no. 49), 156^{37, 40} (nos. 4 and 7), 158³⁹ (no. 47), 163^{33, 36} (nos. 4 and 7), 164³⁷ (no. 47), 172^{11, 14} (nos. 4 and 7), and 173¹⁵ (no. 52); Janin, "Les monastères nationaux," pp. 432-435; Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique*, pp. 461-463.

280 ACO, II/1.1, p. 147⁷⁻⁸ (no. 40); ACO, III, pp. 34¹⁹⁻²⁰ (no. 24), 45²⁵⁻²⁶ (no. 24), 70¹⁻² (no. 26), 129⁹ (no. 22), 143⁹⁻¹⁰ (no. 23), 157¹⁴ (no. 22), 164¹² (no. 22), and 172³⁴ (no. 27); Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique*, pp. 15-16.

281 ACO, III, p. 48³⁰⁻³¹ (no. 85).

282 ACO, III, p. 70¹ (no. 26).

It seems more probable for these words to have referred to a certain area or a monument in Sykai, as Raymond Janin has proposed.

12.6 Scythian Monasticism during the 7th Century

The inroads of the Avars and Slavs by the turn of the 7th century seriously affected monastic life in Roman Scythia. The clearest proof in this respect is the disappearance in that period of all extramural monasteries identified so far on the territory of the former Roman province. In the monastic complex of Slava Rusă (Romania), the last level of living stopped toward the end of the reign of Maurice (582–602). It is not excluded that, menaced by the raid of the Avars and Slavs in 591/592, the monks there may have taken refuge in the neighbouring city of (L)Ibida and remained there, waiting for peaceful times. As things grew worse in the region, the settlement was no longer used.²⁸³

The rock-cut monastery in Dumbrăveni (Romania) seems to have also ceased existing toward the middle or the second half of the 6th century. It is supposed to have gone into decline as a result of several earthquakes, which seriously affected the structure of the monument.²⁸⁴

The other monastic complexes south of the Istro-Pontic territory (on Sukha Reka and Dobrich Valleys, on the Black Sea shore etc.) ceased to exist toward the end of the 6th century or the beginning of the 7th century.²⁸⁵

This information demonstrates that Scythia, a border province, situated in the first line of defence of the empire when it came to barbarian attacks, no longer provided the necessary conditions for monastic life. This led to the abandonment of all monasteries situated outside the fortified settlements. Some of them, such as that of Slava Rusă, were never repopulated. Others, such as those of Dumbrăveni and Petroșani and from the north-eastern part of Bulgaria, were used again in the early Middle Ages (9th–11th centuries).²⁸⁶

However, a monastic centre may have existed in Tomi before the Proto-Bulgarians' settlement south of the Danube in the year 681. As shown in the first part of the present book, the metropolis of Tomi was demoted to the rank of autocephalous archbishopric at the beginning of the 7th century, because

283 See below, subchapter 13.2: 'The monastery near the ancient city of (L)Ibida.'

284 See below, subchapter 13.3: 'The rock-cut monastery near Dumbrăveni.'

285 See below, chapter 13: 'Monasteries on the territory between the Danube and the Black Sea during 4th–7th centuries AD.'

286 See Holubeanu, *Monahismul în Dobrogea*, pp. 154–274.

of the dissolution of the ordinary bishoprics in province.²⁸⁷ This gives way to the possibility that it may have functioned until the year 681, when the political and military situation worsened again in the region. In these conditions, it is possible for a monastery, or at least several monks, to have been active near the Tomitan archbishops.

After 681, it is unlikely for any monastery to have existed there before the second half of the 9th century. Only the presence of isolated monks can be admitted, or of small groups that may have been either passing, or on a mission, or serving the religious needs of the Christians in the areas that remained under Byzantine rule.

In what concerns the Scythian monks that survived the barbarian invasions from the turn of the 7th century, it is not excluded for most of them, or at least some, to have left the province, heading for Constantinople or for Western regions that had not been affected by barbarian invasions. Moreover, in the same period, the troubles provoked by the pagan peoples' attacks generated the exodus of numerous monks from the provinces situated at the eastern extremity of the empire to western Europe, especially toward the Italian Peninsula.²⁸⁸ In the case of the monks originating from Roman Scythia, the hypothesis of this exodus is supported by the fact that they already had strong relations both with Constantinople and with Rome. Emilian Popescu considers the possibility that the Scythian ('*Scytha*') mentioned in Rome on 24 May 631 by the Irish monk Cummián was originally from Roman Scythia.²⁸⁹ However, given the vague meaning of this term at the time, it is difficult to say whether this Scythian was originally from the Danubian province or a monk (or a simple believer) of barbarian origin.

287 See above, subchapter 2.3.3: 'The evolution of the ecclesiastical province of Scythia after 381.'

288 Viktor Lazarev, *Istoria picturii byzantine* [History of Byzantine Painting], 1, trans. Florin Chirițescu (Bucharest: Meridiane, 1980), pp. 153–154 and 156.

289 Cummiánus, *Epistola de Controversia Paschali*, PL 87:977–978: "*cum Graeco et Hebraeo, Scytha et Aegyptiaco, in ecclesia sancti Petri simul in Pascha ... fuerunt;*" ("they were together in the Church of St. Peter at the Passover with a Greek and a Hebrew, a Scythian, and an Egyptian"); Popescu, "Des moines," pp. 316–317.

Monasteries on the Territory between the Danube and the Black Sea during 4th–7th Centuries AD

Most of the extramural monastic complexes of the 4th–7th centuries identified on the territory of the former Roman province of Scythia are rock-cut and cave monasteries. The only exception, from this point of view, is Slava Rusă monastery (Romania). As many of them were restored and reused in early Middle Ages, it is difficult to establish precisely the elements specific to each historical phase. In this chapter, every monastic complex is briefly described, and the main scholarly opinions on their date, function, and characteristics are presented.

13.1 Casian Cave

In the central part of the province (see map 9), in Dobruja Gorge Natural Reservation (“Rezervația Naturală Gura Dobrogei”), archaeologists identified a cave in 1984, known today as Casian Cave (“Peștera Casian”). It is situated on the right bank of Casimcea River (ancient Calabaeus River), in a rocky slope that reaches heights of 100–180 m. The cave is difficult to access, as it is situated at a height of approximately 40 m from Casimcea Valley and 8 m from the terrace in front of its entrance.¹

In Late Antiquity, the region was part of the hinterland (*chora*) of Histria city (now Istria, Romania). The remains of a Hellenistic settlement, several from the late Roman period (2nd–3rd centuries), as well as some settlements or farms from the Late Roman period (4th century) have been archaeologically

1 The description of the cave and the detailed presentation of the archaeological material discovered inside and around it can be found at Emilian Alexandrescu, Alexandru Avram, Octavian Bounegru, and Costel Chiriac, “Cercetări periegetice în teritoriul histrian (II)” [Archaeological Explorations in the Territory of Histria (II)], *Pontica* 19 (1986), pp. 244–246; Lucrețiu Mihăilescu-Bîrliba and Marius Diaconescu, “Cercetări arheologice recente în peștera de la Casian” [Recent Archaeological Researches in the Cave from Casian], *Pontica* 24 (1991), pp. 425–432; Valentina Voinea and Bartłomiej Szmoniewski, “Din nou despre peștera Casian” [Anew about Casian Cave], *Pontica* 44 (2011), pp. 221–238; Valentina Voinea and Bartłomiej Szmoniewski, “L’habitation énéolithique jusqu’au début de la période médiévale dans la région de Cheile Dobrogei-Valée Casimcea (projet roumano-polonais),” *Annales. Académie Polonaise des Sciences. Centre Scientifique à Paris* 15 (2013), pp. 199–201.

identified in the area.² The names of two villages (Kasiana and Spēloucha) are attested there on two rock-cut inscriptions (discovered *in situ*) and on two boundary stones inscriptions, all dated to the first half of the 3rd century AD.³ Right in front of Casian Cave, on the plateau at the base of the rocky slope, the remains of a small (1.5 ha) Late Roman settlement (or of a *villa rustica*) of the 4th century AD have been identified. Ceramic fragments, three oil lamps (one of them with a cross represented on it), an iron bell, and 24 coins (one issued in the 2nd century AD and the others in the 4th) were discovered there.⁴ The oil lamp with the cross reveals the Christian faith of a part of the local population. At approximately 1.5 km west from this place (southeast of now Cheia village), an extended *vicus* type late Roman settlement was found, dating to the 2nd–3rd centuries AD. The remains of an earlier Hellenistic settlement have been identified between these two sites (the late Roman *vicus* and the Late Roman settlement/*villa*).⁵

Certain archaeologists did not exclude the possibility for the Late Roman settlement/*villa rustica* to have been John Cassian's native house and the late Roman village 1.5 km west of it, Kasiana (the so-called *vicus Cassiani*), referred to in inscriptions.⁶

Casian Cave is oriented north-south, and its central part has the aspect of a hall (9.70 × 2.50–8.00 × 2.50–7.00 m) (fig. 10). The western and eastern entrance

2 See Alexandrescu, Avram, Bounegru, and Chiriac, "Cercetări periegetice," p. 247 (no. 12); Constantin Băjenaru, "Casian, com. Târgușor, jud. Constanța, Punctul Gazoduct" [Casian, Târgușor Commune, Constanța County, Pipeline Point], *Cronica Cercetărilor Arheologice din România* Campania 2001 (2002), pp. 88–89; Constantin Băjenaru, "Casian, com. Târgușor, jud. Constanța, Punctul Gazoduct" [Casian, Târgușor Commune, Constanța County, Pipeline Point], *Cronica Cercetărilor Arheologice din România* Campania 2002 (2003), p. 77; Constantin Băjenaru, "A New Boundary Stone between *Kasiana* and *Speloucha* Discovered at Ulmetum," *Dacia* [N.S.] 65 (2021), p. 124; Iulian Bîrzescu and Adam Rabinowitz, "The Rock-Cut Inscriptions from Casian and Their Context," *Dacia* [N.S.] 24 (1980), pp. 140 and 141 (fig. 11).

3 Nicolae Gostar, "Études épigraphiques IV^e," *Dacia* [N.S.] 24 (1980), pp. 311–314; Voinea and Szmoniewski, "Din nou despre peștera Casian," pp. 222–223; Băjenaru, "A New Boundary Stone," pp. 121–125; Bîrzescu and Rabinowitz, "The Rock-Cut Inscriptions," pp. 129–134. Rock-cut inscriptions: 1. "ὄροι Κασιανῶν καὶ σπηλοῦχα" ("the boundaries of the Kasians and Spēloucha"); 2. "ὄροι Κασιανῶν σπηλοῦχῶν" ("the boundaries of the Kasians [and] of the Spēlouchans"). Boundary stones inscriptions: 3–4. side *a*: "Κασι/ανᾶ" ("Kasiana"); side *b*: "Σπηλ/λοῦχα" ("Spēloucha").

4 Băjenaru, "Casian," (2002), pp. 88–89; Băjenaru, "Casian," (2003), p. 77.

5 Băjenaru, "Casian," (2002), pp. 88–89.

6 Voinea and Szmoniewski, "Din nou despre peștera Casian," p. 229; Voinea and Szmoniewski, "L'habitation énéolithique," p. 201. On the possible location of Kasiana, see also Băjenaru, "A New Boundary Stone," pp. 124–125; Bîrzescu and Rabinowitz, "The Rock-Cut Inscriptions," pp. 140–145.

walls display incised letters, small crosses, and monogrammatic signs; a niche for oil lamp is also distinguished.⁷ Most of the representations were dated to the early Middle Ages (10th century).⁸ Certain scholars did not exclude the possibility for a part of the crosses to have been incised in the 4th century.⁹

Large numbers of Late Antique and early Medieval ceramic fragments (10th century) have been discovered on the steep slope leading to the cave entrance.¹⁰ During the archaeologists' surveys inside the cave, other fragments of Late Roman and early Byzantine (4th–6th centuries; the most numerous from the 4th century), and early Medieval ceramic fragments have been identified.¹¹ In one of the archaeological surveys, human bones (phalanges) were found near the Late Roman and early Byzantine ceramic fragments.¹² They reveal aspects of how the cave had been used as a burial place at a certain moment during 4th–6th centuries.¹³ Archaeological evidence led to the conclusion that the cave had been used both in Late Antiquity, and in the early Middle Ages.

Two hypotheses have been advanced concerning its destination in the first phase of habitation. Some scholars supposed that it had been used as a place of refuge, possibly by some Christians, during the persecution of Diocletian (284–305), at the beginning of the 4th century.¹⁴ The arguments invoked were

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- 7 Alexandrescu, Avram, Bounegru, and Chiriac, "Cercetări periegetice," pp. 244 and 246; Costel Chiriac, "Un monument inedit: complexul rupestru de la Dumbrăveni (jud. Constanța)" [An Unpublished Monument: Dumbrăveni Cave Complex], *Pontica* 21–22 (1988–1989), pp. 259 and 264; Mihăilescu-Bîrliba and Diaconescu, "Cercetări arheologice," p. 430; Voinea and Szmoniewski, "Din nou despre peștera Casian," p. 228.
- 8 Alexandrescu, Avram, Bounegru, and Chiriac, "Cercetări periegetice," p. 246, n. 8; Chiriac, "Un monument inedit," pp. 259 and 264; Mihăilescu-Bîrliba and Diaconescu, "Cercetări arheologice," pp. 430–431.
- 9 Voinea and Szmoniewski, "Din nou despre peștera Casian," p. 230.
- 10 Alexandrescu, Avram, Bounegru, and Chiriac, "Cercetări periegetice," pp. 244 and 246.
- 11 Mihăilescu-Bîrliba and Diaconescu, "Cercetări arheologice," pp. 429–431; Voinea and Szmoniewski, "Din nou despre peștera Casian," pp. 227–228; Voinea and Szmoniewski, "L'habitation énéolithique," p. 199.
- 12 Voinea and Szmoniewski, "Din nou despre peștera Casian," p. 228.
- 13 Human burials from the Late Roman and early Byzantine periods (4th–6th centuries) are also known in two other caves of Dobruja Gorge area: La Izvor Cave (see Voinea and Szmoniewski, "Din nou despre peștera Casian," p. 228) and X/Craniilor Cave (see Voinea and Szmoniewski, "Din nou despre peștera Casian," p. 228; Voinea and Szmoniewski, "L'habitation énéolithique," p. 196).
- 14 Alexandrescu, Avram, Bounegru, and Chiriac, "Cercetări periegetice," p. 246, n. 8; Mihăilescu-Bîrliba and Diaconescu, "Cercetări arheologice," p. 431. Contra: Radu Mișu, "Monahismul daco-roman" [Daco-Roman Monasticism], in *Monahismul ortodox românesc: istorie, contribuții și repertoriizare*, 1, eds. Mircea Păcurariu and Nicolae Edroiu (Bucharest: Basilica, 2014), p. 299, n. 70.

the isolated position of the cave and the fact that it was difficult to access it. According to the second hypothesis (that does not exclude the first), it had been used as a shelter by certain monks during the Late Roman and early Byzantine periods.¹⁵ Both hypotheses are plausible.

In the case of its being used by some ascetics in the region after the end of Diocletian's persecution, it is to be noted that the little Late Roman settlement or farm (*villa rustica*) was in existence right next to it, at that time (4th century). In these conditions, the monks of the cave would have belonged to the category of ascetics living in the neighbourhood of settlements. They may have been materially supported by the residents living there, who (some of them) were Christians. Toward the end of the 4th or the beginning of the 5th century, the settlement/*villa* was abandoned. From that moment onward, the cave fulfilled the necessary conditions for the monks' complete retreat from the world.

No altar remains were identified within the cave. In these conditions, it is possible for the supposed local monks to have participated, at least until the end of the 4th century, in Eucharistic ceremonies officiated at one of the rural churches in the region (not yet identified). It is difficult to say what happened after the abandonment of the supposed *vicus* (*villa*?) nearby. Other caves are also known in the region, supposed to have been used by monks. This gives way to the possibility that these small monastic communities may have been organized in a *laura*-type of colony, having its own church (not identified). The use of Casian Cave as a burial place in the Late Roman/early Byzantine period does not exclude this hypothetical scenario, as similar cases are attested also in other contemporary monastic complexes of the province (in Dumbrăveni and Murfatlar rock-cut monasteries, in the cave monastic complexes on Sukha Reka and Dobrich Valleys, and in Kaliakra Cape) (see below). The human remains found in Casian Cave may have belonged to one of the monks who had lived there in Late Antiquity.

Regarding the hypothesis that the supposed *villa* near the cave may have belonged to John Cassian's family, this cannot be confirmed with undeniable evidence, but certain data are compatible with this hypothesis: 1. According to John Cassian's confession, his parents were faithful and wealthy Christians, having large properties in a forested area, suitable for monastic life.¹⁶ This picture corresponds to the relief and fauna of Dobruja Gorge. Moreover, some of the people living in *villa* were Christians, which has been supported by the oil

15 Mihăilescu-Bîrliba and Diaconescu, "Cercetări arheologice," p. 431; Voinea and Szmoniewski, "Din nou despre peștera Casian," pp. 226 and 229; Voinea and Szmoniewski, "L'habitation énéolithique," pp. 200 and 203; Mișu, "Monahismul daco-roman," p. 299.

16 See above, subchapter 11.1: 'The Scythian monasticism in the time of John Cassian.'

lamp with a cross found there; 2. The cave and *villa* were on the territory of a Roman village called Kasiana. From its name could originate (according to the supposition of Henri-Irénée Marrou)¹⁷ the name Cassian, attributed to John ('John the Cassian'). Following the thread of this hypothesis, it would not be excluded that some of the monks that John Cassian met in his youth, in his native province, may have been those living in the cave near the *villa*. On the other hand, considering his testimony that anchorite monasticism was weakly represented (if not unknown) in Scythia in the second half of the 4th century, the cave could have sheltered a small community, but not an anchorite. The number of those living there must have been quite small (4–5 monks), given the reduced dimensions of the cave. It would not be excluded for other similar communities to have existed also in some of the other caves of Dobruja Gorge (in Izvor Cave, Baba Cave, Craniilor Cave).¹⁸ It is difficult to say, however, if a monastic colony similar to those established south of the province (see below) developed at Dobruja Gorge over time. This hypothesis would be confirmed if the remains of a church from the 4th–6th centuries had been identified in the area.

13.2 The Monastery Near the Ancient City of (L)Ibida

The remains of a monastery from the 4th–6th centuries have been discovered on the administrative territory of the present-day village of Slava Rusă (Slava Cercheză Commune, Tulcea County, Romania) in the year 1987. The monument is situated approximately 2.5 km west of the remains of the ancient (L)Ibida (now Slava Rusă) (see map 9).¹⁹

Archaeological investigations have permitted the identification of three phases of existence of the monument (fig. 11). In the first phase, there was a one-nave basilica ('A'), oriented west-east, composed of naos (10.40 × 6.65 m) and the apse of the altar (2.50 × 5.00 m), with a rectangular room (2.60 × 3.10 m)

17 Henri-Irénée Marrou, "La patrie de Jean Cassien," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 13 (1947), pp. 588–596.

18 Voinea and Szmoniewski, "Din nou despre peștera Casian," pp. 228–229; Voinea and Szmoniewski, "L'habitation énéolithique," pp. 189–198, 200, and 202–204.

19 Andrei Opaîț, Cristina Opaîț, and Teodor Bănică, "Der frühchristliche Komplex von Slava Rusă," in *Die Schwarzmeerküste in der Spätantike und im frühen Mittelalter. Referate des dritten, vom 16. bis 19. Oktober 1990 durch die Antiquarische Abteilung der Balkan-Kommission der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften und das Bulgarische Forschungsinstitut veranstalteten Symposions*, eds. Renate Pillinger et al., (Schriften der Balkankommission. Antiquarische Abteilung) 18 (Vienna: Verlag der Österreichischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1992), pp. 113–122.

(*pastophoria*) to the south. Its walls were built of limestone bound with clay (a technique used also in the following phases of the complex).²⁰

In the second phase, the plan of the monastery underwent several changes: (i.) The naos of 'A' basilica was extended toward the east (with 1.50 m) by abandoning the old apse and building a new one (3.90 × 4.50 m); (ii.) In the western part of the edifice a transversal narthex (4.50 × 10.05 m) was built, deviated toward the north from the axis of the church; (iii.) The southern side room was rebuilt; (iv.) Two new places of worship were built: a basilica ('B') with a naos (6.90 × 3.30 m) and an apse (2.00 × 1.50 m), situated at a short distance to the north from 'A,' and a chapel with a naos (4.80 × 2.80 m) and an apse (2.05 × 1.00 m), attached to the eastern half of the north side of 'A' basilica; (v.) A wall was built west of 'A' and 'B' basilicas, marking a semi-closed space between the two worship places; (vi.) An enclosure wall is supposed to have been built; its remains have been identified south of 'A' basilica.²¹

In the third phase, the narthex of 'A' basilica was slightly modified, the southern side room was enlarged, and other spaces were built in the eastern side of the edifice. Moreover, the floors of the two basilicas were restored and a new enclosure wall was erected. A wooden structure household annex was built in the south-west corner of the precincts.²²

The archaeologists who researched the complex dated the beginning of its first phase of existence to the second half of the 4th century; the second phase

20 Opaïț, Opaïț, and Bănică, "Der frühchristliche Komplex," pp. 113–114; Virgil Lungu, *Creștinismul în Scythia Minor în contextul vest-pontic* [The Christianity in Scythia Minor in the West-Pontic Context] (Sibiu/Constanța: T.C. Sen, 2000), p. 76.

21 Opaïț, Opaïț, and Bănică, "Der frühchristliche Komplex," pp. 114–115. Alexander Manev ["Early Monasticism in Thrace: An Issue of Archaeology," *Studia Academica Șumenensia* 4 (2017), p. 226] considers also the possibility for a baptistery to have been erected within the complex. He does not mention its place, but, as he refers to a new building (apart from the new basilica and the chapel), it must have been the transept raised to the western side of the old basilica. In this room (on its last level), near the entrance to the naos, a vessel with a high cylindrical stand and a wide and shallow basin of a circular shape fixed on the top was discovered. However, it is considered a lustral pot by the authors of the discovery, not a vessel intended for baptism—see Opaïț, Opaïț, and Bănică, "Der frühchristliche Komplex," pp. 117–118; similarly, Victor H. Baumann, *Sângele Martirilor* [The Blood of the Martyrs] (Constanța: Editura Dobrogea, 2015), p. 104, fig. 25; Alexander Minchev, "A Lost Early Christian Rite in the Eastern Church: Terracotta Fonts for Consecrated Water from Moesia Secunda and Scythia," in *Novae: Studies and Materials*, 6, ed. Elena Ju. Klenina (Poznań: Instytut Historii UAM, 2018), pp. 127–136.

22 Opaïț, Opaïț, and Bănică, "Der frühchristliche Komplex," pp. 115–116. Victor H. Baumann (*Sângele martirilor*, p. 103), followed also by Alexander Minchev ("A Lost Early Christian Rite," p. 130), dates the second phase in the 6th century, most probably under Justinian I or Justin II.

in the second half of the 5th century; and the third phase after the Avars' attack in 585–586.²³ If the recently advanced opinions regarding the worsening of the situation in Roman Scythia during the reign of Leo I (457–474) are correct,²⁴ the last quarter of the 5th century could be considered for the beginning of the second phase. Furthermore, the possibility for the last phase to have started earlier, after the inroad of the Kutrigurs in 559, when the neighbouring (L)Ibida was seriously damaged,²⁵ could be taken into account. The destruction and definitive abandonment of the monastery are considered to have taken place toward the end of the reign of Maurice (582–602). A treasure was found among the remains of the monastery [1 solidus issued under Justin II (565–574) and 7 under Maurice], deposited as a result of the inroad of the Avars and Slavs in 591/592.²⁶ This discovery suggests that the monastery had been abandoned before the destruction of (L)Ibida city, which occurred during the inroad of the Avars and Slavs in 614/615.²⁷

23 Opaïț, Opaïț, and Bănică, “Der frühchristliche Komplex,” pp. 116–117.

24 See Liana Oța, “Hunii în Dobrogea” [The Huns in Dobruja], *Istros* x (2000), pp. 370–371.

25 See Mihaela Iacob, Antonio Ibba, Dorel Paraschiv, and Alessandro Teatini, “La città romana di (L)Ibida, in Scythia Minor. Le ricerche recenti e l'accordo di collaborazione tra l'Istituto di Ricerche Eco-Museali di Tulcea e l'Università di Sassari,” in *Culti e religiosità nelle province danubiane. Atti del 11 Convegno Internazionale Ferrara 20–22 Novembre 2013 a cura di Livio Zerbini*, eds. Laura Audino and Silvia Ripà (Bologna: Casa editrice Emil di Odoia, 2015), p. 569; Mihaela Iacob, “Le monete raccontano la storia di una città. Il caso della Polis Ibida,” in *Numismatica e Archeologia. Monete, stratigrafie e contesti. Dati a confronto. Workshop Internazionale di Numismatica*, eds. Giacomo Pardini et al. (Roma: Edizioni Quasar, 2018), p. 243.

26 Mihaela Iacob, “Le trésor de solidi romans-byzantins découvert à Ibida (Scythie Mineure),” in *Simpozion de Numismatică dedicat centenarului Societății Numismatice Române (1903–2003): Chișinău, 26–28 noiembrie 2003/comunicări, studii și note*, eds. Eugen Nicolae et al. (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 2005), pp. 75–79; Dorel Paraschiv and Mihaela Iacob, “(L)Ibida christiana,” in *Îndrumător Pastoral—Episcopia Tulcii* 6 (2014), p. 364.

27 On the destruction of (L)Ibida, see: Antoaneta Vertan and Gabriel Custurea, “Descoperiri monetare în Dobrogea (x)” [Coin Discoveries in Dobruja (x)], *Pontica* 28–29 (1995–1996), p. 318, no. 1615; Andrei Opaïț, „O săpătură de salvare în orașul antic Ibida” [A Rescue Excavation in the Ancient City of Ibida], *Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche și Arheologie* 42 (1991), nos. 1–2, p. 54; Mihaela Iacob, “La circulation monétaire à (L)Ibida (Scythie Mineure) du v^e siècle au début du vii^e siècle,” in *Byzantine Coins in Central Europe between the 5th and 10th Century. Proceedings from the Conference Organised by Polish Academy of Arts and Sciences and Institute of Archaeology University of Rzeszów under the Patronage of Union Académique International (Programme No. 57 Moravia Magna) Kraków, 23–26 1V 2007*, ed. Marcin Wołoszyn, (Moravia Magna. Seria Polona) 3 (Kraków: Polska Akademia Umiejętności, 2009), p. 70.

Most of the scholars appreciated this complex as having functioned as a monastery from the beginning (the second half of the 4th century).²⁸ Still, Victor H. Baumann considered that 'A' basilica belonged to a rural community in its first phase of existence.²⁹ To support this opinion, he invoked the discovery in its neighbourhood of some isolated constructions from the 4th century, attributed to some farmers, as well as of a tomb where many families living in the area (39 people) were buried. Nevertheless, the archaeological researches carried out at the respective living complexes revealed that they stopped existing under the reign of Valens (364–378).³⁰ In what concerns the common tomb, it is situated in the necropolis of (L)Ibida and it belonged, as it seems, to one of the wealthy families of the city.³¹ Consequently, the possibility for the first worship place ('A') to have had initially the destination of a rural basilica is less probable.

There is no scholarly consensus on the organization of the monks there. Starting from the dimensions and the architectural plan of the monastery (especially the lack of cells on premises), some scholars have considered it a *laura*.³² This would mean that the monks, living outside the complex, prayed in their own dwellings during the week, whereas on Saturday and on Sunday they participated together in Eucharistic ceremonies at the church of the monastery. Other scholars have argued that it was a *coenobium*, meaning that the monks lived and prayed together, being in obedience to the hegumen of the

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- 28 Opaïț, Opaïț, and Bănică, "Der frühchristliche Komplex," p. 119; Lungu, *Creștinismul*, p. 76; Iacob, "Le trésor de solidi," p. 75; Paraschiv and Iacob, "(L)Ibida christiana," pp. 364–366; Ioan Aurel Pop, "Viața bisericească și monahismul de rit bizantin pe teritoriul României până la 1300" [Ecclesiastical Life and Byzantine Rite Monasticism on the Territory of Romania until 1300], in *Monahismul ortodox românesc: istorie, contribuții și repertoriare*, 1, eds. Mircea Păcurariu and Nicolae Edroiu (Bucharest: Basilica, 2014), p. 350; Manev, "Early Monasticism in Thrace," p. 226.
- 29 Victor H. Baumann, "Paleochristian Churches in Roman Rural Environment," in *Studia antiqua et archaeologica* 12 (2006), pp. 126–127; Baumann, *Sângele Martirilor*, pp. 103–105; followed by Minchev, "A Lost Early Christian Rite," p. 130.
- 30 Paraschiv and Iacob, "(L)Ibida christiana," p. 363.
- 31 Paraschiv and Iacob, "(L)Ibida christiana," p. 365; Carsten Mischka, Alexander Rubel, and Mihaela Iacob, "Geomagnetische prospektion in (L)Ibida (Slava Rusă, kreis Tulcea). Vorläufige ergebnisse der ersten etappe eines gemeinschaftlichen forschungsprojekts des Archäologischen Instituts Iași und der Friedrich-Alexanderuniversität Erlangen," *Arheologia Moldovei* 38 (2015), pp. 272–273.
- 32 Opaïț, Opaïț, and Bănică, "Der frühchristliche Komplex," p. 122; Baumann, *Sângele Martirilor*, p. 105; Baumann, "Paleochristian Churches," p. 127; Paraschiv and Iacob, "(L)Ibida christiana," p. 365; Manev, "Early Monasticism in Thrace," pp. 226–227.

community.³³ Others pointed to the fact that, by its plan, this monastery has a lot in common with contemporary monastic settlements from the Balkan area, some of them being coenobia and others laurae.³⁴

The absence of monastic cells suggests that the centre of a laura was there, which included the worship places and the household annexes used by the monks in the weekend. The walls enclosing the inner yard cannot be invoked in favour of the existence of a coenobium, as they had to include the dwellings as well.³⁵ However, the discovery of that treasure from the end of the 6th century support the common management of the monks' material resources, which is a case indicating a coenobium. Only the future can clearly reveal if the monks' cells are identified, based on their location and dimensions, which was the organization form of the monks there.

The small dimensions of the basilicas reveal the existence of a little community throughout the whole period when the monastery was functional. Moreover, as will be shown, this is the characteristic of all monasteries identified so far on the territory of the former Roman province of Scythia. This aspect agrees with Basil the Great's vision, as he considered every monastic community like a family, led by *proestos*. For this reason, Basilian communities were moderate in number of dwellers (30–40 monks).³⁶ The one in Slava Rusă reached, most probably, at most half of this number.

It is difficult to say which was the level of spiritual life of the monks in Slava Rusă. The reduced dimensions of the community indicate a high level. Nevertheless, this supposition can be accepted only for the first existence phase of the monastery. As already shown, after the First Council of Ephesus (431),

33 Adrian Rădulescu and Ion Bitoleanu, *Istoria Dobrogei* [History of Dobruja], 2nd ed. (Constanța: Ex Ponto, 1998), p. 161.

34 Costel Chiriac and Tudor Papasima, "Un străvechi așezământ creștin dobrogean. Complexul monastic de la Dumbrăveni (județul Constanța)" [An Early Christian Monument in Dobruja—The Monastic Complex from Dumbraveni (County of Constanța)], in *Priveghind și lucrând pentru mântuire. Volum editat la aniversarea a 10 ani de arhipăstorire a Înalț Prea Sfințitului Mitropolit Daniel al Moldovei și Bucovinei (1 iulie 1990–1 iulie 2000)*, eds. Emilian Popescu et al. (Iași: Trinitas, 2000), p. 203.

35 In the Christian East, there are situations where the church of a laura and the edifices close to it were enclosed by a wall, like coenobia. The building projects were motivated in some of the cases by the desire and need to enhance the monks' security—see Joseph Patrich, *Sabas, Leader of Palestinian Monasticism: A Comparative Study in Eastern Monasticism, Fourth to Seventh Centuries*, (Dumbarton Oaks Studies) 32 (Washington, D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1995), pp. 122–124. The possibility for the enclosure wall of the monastery in Slava Rusă to have had a defensive role is excluded, though—see Opaïț, Opaïț, and Bănică, "Der frühchristliche Komplex," p. 115, n. 12.

36 See above, chapter 8: 'A historical survey of Eastern monasticism.'

empirical theology was replaced by that of a scholastic type in the Church of Roman Scythia, fact that turned the monks' effort from reaching inner perfection to the external asceticism, scholastic theological study, and various practical activities.³⁷ Therefore, paradoxically, the material development of the local monasteries, proved by the vestiges from Slava Rusă and from the other contemporary monastic settlements in the province (see below), did not also involve a higher level of spiritual living.

In what concerns the end of the monastery, it is not excluded that the monks may have taken refuge to (L)Ibida under the threat of the inroad of the Avars and Slavs in 591/592, waiting for peaceful times (that never came). There, eventually, they could have contributed to the organization of an urban monastery, near the episcopal see in the city.³⁸ Future archaeological investigations, as much as they can be carried out, will have to confirm this hypothesis.³⁹

The complex of Slava Rusă proves the perpetuation of monastic life in Roman Scythia throughout the troubled period that followed the Huns' settlement in the Lower Danube region at the end of the 4th century. The mere existence of this monastery throughout the 5th century illustrates that at least the situation from the end of the previous century was maintained. The regional stabilization in the last quarter of the 5th century⁴⁰ favoured the extension of the complex, also revealing a certain increase in the number of Christian inhabitants who adopted monastic life. The building of the second basilica and of the chapel also reflect the local monasteries' tendency of rallying, liturgically and architecturally, to the monastic settlements existing at that time in the rest of the empire. The fact that in the third phase of existence no new worship place was built, and the old ones were not extended, shows that they continued to meet satisfactorily the liturgical needs of the community. On the other hand, the building of the annexes on the eastern side proves the monks' preoccupation with solving administrative and household necessities.

The importance of the complex in Slava Rusă resides also in the fact that it can help date the other monastic complexes in Roman Scythia. Its founding in the second half of the 4th century introduces the possibility for other monasteries to have been built in the province at that time, while its extension in the second half/last quarter of the 5th century and in the following one [most probably during the reign of Justinian I (527–565)] reveals the local

37 See above, subchapter 12.3.4: 'The doctrine of salvation of the Scythian monks.'

38 On the episcopal see of (L)Ibida, see above, subchapter 3.4: 'The bishoprics of (L)Ibida and Argamum.'

39 The largest part of the ancient city of (L)Ibida is now covered by the houses of the modern Slava Rusă village.

40 See Oța, "Hunii în Dobrogea," pp. 370–371.

contemporary conditions favourable for the development of monasticism in the province.

13.3 The Rock-Cut Monastery Near Dumbrăveni

The rock-cut monastery near modern Dumbrăveni (Romania) was situated in the southern part of Roman Scythia (see map 9). It is carved into the wall of a ravine of 10–12 m high, oriented west-east. Archaeological investigations have revealed that it had been organized in Late Antiquity and reused, following a refitting, in the early Middle Ages.⁴¹

In Late Antiquity, the settlement was organized on two levels: the ground floor and the second level (situated at a height of 3 m from the base of the rocky massif). The main edifice on the second level is a basilica ('B1') (10.00 × 1.50 × 2.00–2.10 m) composed (from west to east) of a counter-apse (or funeral exedra), an access space (exonarthex), a narthex/pronaos, a naos, and the apse of the altar (fig. 13). The counter-apse/funeral exedra is slightly deviated toward the north from the axis of the basilica. In the northern part of the access space (exonarthex), there is an arcosolium (set in the depth of the rocky massif), in whose pavement three tombs are carved ('M1'–'M3'), oriented according to the Christian tradition (west-east). From the eastern part of the arcosolium starts a gallery ('G' refuge corridor) (40.00 × 0.90 × 1.00–1.20 m), advancing to the east approximately parallel with the facade of the rocky massif. In its western half, the gallery communicates with the pronaos, naos, and apse of the basilica. In its middle, there is a rectangular (1.50 × 1.50 m) room ('F'), which is supposed to have functioned as a diaconicon (fig. 12).⁴²

The remains of several rooms have been identified on the ground floor of the complex, right under 'B1' basilica. Some of them were funerary, as three tombs were identified in them ('M4'–'M6'). Others were used for household

41 For the presentation of the monastic complex in Dumbrăveni, the following studies were used: Chiriac, "Un monument inedit," pp. 249–268; Chiriac and Papisima, "Un străvechi așezământ," pp. 197–205; Tudor Papisima and Costel Chiriac, "Monede romane de la Dumbrăveni (județul Constanța)" [Roman Coins from Dumbrăveni (Constanța County)], *Pontica* 28–29 (1995–1996), pp. 267–269; Sergiu Haimovici, "Studiul resturilor animaliere, datate în secolele IX–X, descoperite în ruinele unui așezământ monahal paleocreștin de la Dumbrăveni, jud. Constanța" [The Study of Animal Remains, Dated in the 9th–10th Centuries, Discovered in the Remains of an Early-Christian Monastic Settlement from Dumbrăveni, Constanța County], *Acta Moldaviae Septentrionalis* 1 (1999), pp. 291–309.

42 Chiriac and Papisima, "Un străvechi așezământ," p. 199.

or administrative purpose, or, as supposed, for as living quarters.⁴³ The skeletons of two men were found in 'M4' and 'M5' tombs, whereas in 'M5' a coin issued in Constantinople in 383, under Emperor Valentinian II (375–392), was uncovered.⁴⁴

Based on the plan of 'B1' basilica, on the architecture of 'M6' tomb (hypogeal), on the issuing year of the coin in 'M5' (383), and on other secondary elements, the beginning of the monastic complex was dated in the second half/end of the 4th century—the beginning of the 5th.⁴⁵

Even if this general dating is plausible, it is unlikely for the settlement to have had the plan presented above when it was first founded. It seems more likely that it may have had more than one phase in Late Antiquity. The main argument in this respect is the existence of the counter-apse/funeral exedra.

The counter-apses of the early-Christian basilicas developed since mid-5th century AD in northern Africa, in a phase posterior to the building of the respective worship places.⁴⁶ Some of them had an altar (therefore, a liturgical

43 Household and administrative destination: Chiriac and Papisima, "Un străvechi așezământ," p. 198. Monks' cells: Georgi Atanasov, *Khristiānskiāt Durostorum-Drüstūr* [The Christian Durostorum-Drastar] (Veliko Tarnovo: Zograf, 2007), pp. 113–114; Georgi Atanasov, "Les monastères rupestres le long de la rivière Suha, dans la région de Dobruđa de Sud," *Byzantinoslavica* 69 (2011), pp. 202–203.

44 Papisima and Chiriac, "Monede romane," pp. 267–269; Chiriac and Papisima, "Un străvechi așezământ," p. 200.

45 The second half of the 4th century: Chiriac and Papisima, "Un străvechi așezământ," p. 198; Oana Damian, Andra Samson, and Mihai Vasile, "Complexul rupestru de la Murfatlar-Basarabi la jumătate de secol de la descoperire. Considerații arheologice" [The Rupestrian Site of Murfatlar-Basarabi, 50 Years after Its Discovery. Archaeological Investigations], *Materiale și Cercetări Arheologice* 5 (2009), p. 120, n. 25. The end of the 4th–5th century: Atanasov, *Khristiānskiāt Durostorum*, p. 115.

46 On the chronology of the North-African counter-apses, see especially: Noël Duval, *Sbeitla et les églises africaines a deux absides: Recherches archéologiques sur la liturgie chrétienne en Afrique du Nord*, 1 (Paris: De Boccard, 1971), pp. 61–88 and 248–298; Noël Duval, *Les églises africaines a deux absides: Inventaire des monuments, interprétation*, 2 (Paris: De Boccard, 1973), pp. 305–308 and 358–365; Noël Duval, "Études d'Archéologie chrétienne nord-africaine: XVI. Une basilique chrétienne à deux absides à Sabratha (Tripolitaine)? La basilique 1: une révision récente," *Revue des Études Augustiniennes* 33 (1987), pp. 269–301. As secondary bibliography regarding the counter-apses, see: Pasquale Testini, *Archeologia cristiana: nozioni generali dalle origini alla fine del sec. VI; propedeutica, topografia cimiteriale, epigrafia, edifici di culto*, 2nd ed. (Bari: Edipuglia, 1980), pp. 585–586; Charles Delvoye, "Études d'architecture paléochrétienne et byzantine (Suite)," *Byzantion* 32 (1962), no. 2, pp. 527–529; Robert Milburn, *Early Christian Art and Architecture* (Berkeley/Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 154–155; Patout J. Burns and Robin Margaret Jensen, *Christianity in Roman Africa: The Development of Its Practices and Beliefs* (Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2014), pp. 78, 97–100, 129–131, and 145–148.

destination), others a martyrological or funeral character, with tombs of martyrs, reliquaries with small parts of relics, or crypts of hierarchs or of eminent priests of the respective Christian communities. In some cases, the martyrological or funeral function chronologically followed the liturgical one. From Africa, the counter-apses appear in Spain and Portugal (from c.500) and, likely, in Italy too (basilica St. Felix in Cimitile). However, most of them are found in Africa and Spain. They reappear in eastern France, Switzerland, and Germany in the Carolingian period. It is not clear if there is any connection between the latter examples and those from Late Antiquity.⁴⁷

After Noël Duval, the only possible counter-apse in the Eastern Roman Empire is that of the basilica in Erment (Egypt). Those in Philippi (Greece, 'A' basilica), Baalbeck (Syria, the former heathen temple of Jupiter Heliopolitanus), Ephesus (Asia Minor-Turkey, basilica St. Mary), and Lechaeum (Corinth-Greece) cannot be considered counter-apses.⁴⁸ However, Pasquale Testini states that some basilicas in the Balkan Peninsula had funeral counter-apses.⁴⁹ Most likely, the one of Dumbrăveni also had a funerary function, a piece of evidence in this regard is the three graves ('M1'-'M3') close to it.⁵⁰

At the moment, neither the connection (direct or indirect) between the counter-apses/funeral exedra in Roman Scythia and those in Africa, nor their chronological relationship are clear. However, considering that most of these premises have been identified in Africa and that from there they spread to other regions (as Spain), it can be considered that those in Roman Scythia are posterior to the oldest African ones. In this case, they cannot be earlier than the middle of the 5th century and so must be the one of Dumbrăveni. As such, dating the latter to the second half of the 4th century—the beginning of the 5th

47 Duval, *Les églises africaines*, pp. 377–379, 381–397, and 401.

48 Duval, *Les églises africaines*, pp. 65, 73, 354, 372, and 398–400. On the western exedra in the atrium of 'A' basilica in Philippi (Greece), see also R.F. Hodinott, *Early Byzantine Churches in Macedonia and Southern Serbia. A Study of the Origins and the Initial Development of East Christian Art* (London/New York: Macmillan, 1963), p. 170, fig. 80.

49 Testini, *Archeologia cristiana*, p. 585; see also Ion Barnea, "Dobrogea între anii 681–1186" [Dobruja between the Years 681 and 1186], in Ion Barnea and Ștefan Ștefănescu, *Din istoria Dobrogei* [A History of Dobruja], 3 (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1968), p. 190; Ion Barnea, "Monumente creștine și viața bisericească în secolele VII–XIV" [Christian Monuments and the Church Life in the 7th–14th Centuries], in *Monumente istorice și izvoare creștine. Mărturii de străveche existență și continuitate a românilor pe teritoriul Dunării de Jos și al Dobrogei*, ed. Antim Nica (Galați: Editura Arhiepiscopiei Tomisului și Dunării de Jos, 1987), pp. 101 and 103; Georgi Atanasov, "Influences ethno-culturelles dans l'ermitage rupestres près de Murfatlar à Dobrudja," *Byzantinoslavica* 57 (1996), p. 117.

50 See also Atanasov, *Khristiānskūāt Durostorum*, p. 114; Atanasov, "Les monastères rupestres," p. 203.

cannot be accepted. It must have been set out later, in the second half/end of the 5th century, or even at the beginning of the following one. Considering the dating of the second phase of existence of the monastery in Slava Rusă (the second half/last quarter of the 5th century), when the monastery underwent the most extensive development (see above), it is possible that the extension of the Dumbrăveni complex occurred at the same time. It was favoured by the convenient economic and military regional context, given the end of the barbarian attacks on Roman Scythia. In this case, the 'B1' basilica either did not exist when the monastery in Dumbrăveni was founded (the second half of the 4th century), or had a more simple plan as compared to the one preserved to date. As no other worship place necessary for the monks to officiate the divine service had been identified on the premises of the settlement in Dumbrăveni since Late Antiquity, the existence of a basilica on the second level of the complex, dating to the end of the 4th century, appears as a necessity. In this case, the church must have had a simpler plan at that time. It was certainly not provided with counter-apse. Nevertheless, it is not excluded that it may have been smaller first, including the present access space/exonarthex or only its eastern half (used as a pronaos at that time), the present narthex (used as naos), and the apse of the altar, disappeared today, which could have been situated in the western half of the present-day naos. This practical hypothesis is also supported by the extreme length of the present narthex (the supposed initial naos, 2.50 m long), which exceeds the length of the preserved naos (2.00 m). The present proportion between the dimensions of the two rooms (narthex/pronaos and naos) of the preserved basilica is really exceptional for a basilica of the second half/end of the 4th century. A sign of the initial basilica's extension to the east is the existence in the present naos' ceiling of a downward curve beginning (at approximately 0.60 m from the western wall of the room), which could be a remnant of the calotte overlapping the old apse of the worship place. In this case, as in Slava Rusă, in the second half/end of the 5th century, the initial place of worship, approximately a century old, was extended both westward, by enlarging the old narthex (become access space/exonarthex) and carving the counter-apse, and eastward, by digging a new naos and a new apse of the altar. It is not excluded for 'G' gallery, with the westward tombs and 'F' room, to have been carved at the same time. An indication in this respect could be the fact that some of the first monks of the monastery were buried on the ground floor of the complex, and not on the second level, close to the worship place, which suggests the absence of the tombs on the second level at that time (the second half/end of the 4th century).

In what concerns the abandonment of the monastery in Late Antiquity, it was explained by possible natural disasters, which deeply affected the structure

of the complex in the 6th century, possibly under Justinian I (527–565). The facade of the rocky massif supposedly collapsed due to earthquakes, landslides, or erosion caused by water. Thus, the church remained uncovered on all its southern side and the ground floor rooms were destroyed by the fallen rocks, which eventually led to the abandonment of the complex.⁵¹ Moreover, its abandonment must have been determined also by the troubled situation from the second half/end of the 6th century. Otherwise, the monks there could have refitted it, as did those of the early Middle Ages, who reused it.

Scholars have approximated the number of the monks in Dumbrăveni to 12 dwellers at most. Regarding their form of organization, they were supposed to have formed a community of hermits (*laura*).⁵² The possibility for a *coenobium* to have existed there must not be excluded. As already shown, certain scholars have considered that there were also some cells on the ground floor of the complex. On the other hand, the future will show if on the opposite slope (situated closely and not researched in a detailed way) of the small ravine where the monument is situated other rooms existed, which could provide further details on this topic.

Moreover, mention must be made that, unlike the monastery of Slava Rusă, Dumbrăveni was situated in a much more isolated area. This aspect supports the supposition that the founders of the settlement (from the second half/end of the 4th century) were followers of the contemplative way of living. This characteristic of their life finds support also in the results of the anthropological expertise made on the human remains discovered in 'M4' and 'M5' tombs. According to it, one of the people buried there (both mature men) had a vegetarian diet and did not practice tiring manual labor, whereas another one led a sedentary life.⁵³ Therefore, they could be two monks dedicated to asceticism and prayer. To maintain everyday life, most probably they carried out activities compatible with their ascetic living, which did not involve leaving the complex or a special physical effort. Such a way of living does not exclude their organization according to the principles of the community life. It may be supposed that the change in the soteriological doctrine of the Church in Scythia, initiated in the year 431, deeply affected the spiritual aims of the monks in Dumbrăveni. The teaching on predestination did not involve renouncing asceticism, but, under its shadow, asceticism received a mainly exterior character, its role in the monk's spiritual perfection being secondary.

51 Chiriac and Papisima, "Un străvechi așezământ," p. 199; Damian, Samson, and Vasile, "Complexul," p. 120, n. 25.

52 Chiriac and Papisima, "Un străvechi așezământ," pp. 198–199, 201, and 203.

53 Chiriac and Papisima, "Un străvechi așezământ," pp. 201–202.

13.4 The Rock-Cut Monastery Near Murfatlar

One of the most extended rock-cut monastic complexes in Dobruja was found in the slope of a chalk hill not far from the modern town of Murfatlar (called for a while Basarabi, Romania) in the year 1957 (map 9).⁵⁴ During the early Middle Ages, a chalk quarry functioned there, used for the building of a part of the Great Earthen Dike across Dobruja, between Cochirleni on the Danube and Constanța on the Black Sea coast.⁵⁵

The rooms of the complex are grouped in two areas, known in the specialized literature as 'B' and 'E,' situated at a distance of 30–40 m one from the other. The first one includes four chapels ('B1'–'B4'), a gallery ('H'), some annex rooms, and two cells ('C1'–'C2'), whereas the second one has two chapels ('E3' and 'E5'), four rooms ('E1,' 'E2,' 'E4,' and 'E6'), and five funeral galleries ('G1'–'G5') (figs. 14 and 15). The edifices in 'B' area are built on three terraces, corresponding to three phases of activity within the quarry.⁵⁶ On the upper terrace are situated 'B1' and 'B2' chapels and 'C1' and 'C2' cells, on the middle one, 'B3' chapel and its annex rooms, and on the inferior one, 'B4' chapel. Monuments in 'E' area are situated on the highest level of that part of the quarry.

'B1,' 'B2,' and 'B4' chapels are composed of a pronaos, a naos, and the apse of the altar, whereas 'B3' of naos and apse. 'B2,' 'B3,' and 'B4' are superimposed, whereas the first two ('B2' and 'B3') are related by 'H' gallery. In the

54 The bibliography dedicated to the rock-cut monastic complex in Murfatlar is extremely rich. For the description of these monuments, the following studies were mainly used: Ion Barnea and Virgil Bilciurescu, "Șantierul arheologic Basarabi (reg. Constanța) [Basarabi Archaeological Site (Constanța Region)], *Materiale și cercetări arheologice* 6 (1959), pp. 541–566; Ion Barnea, "Les monuments rupestres de Basarabi en Dobroudja," *Cahiers Archéologiques* 13 (1962), pp. 187–208; Barnea, "Dobrogea între anii 681–1186," pp. 160–172; Ion Barnea, "Biserițele rupestre de la Murfatlar" [The Rock-Cut Churches in Murfatlar], in *De la Dunăre la Mare. Mărturii istorice și monumente de artă creștină*, eds. Antim Nica et al. (Galați: Editura Arhiepiscopiei Tomisului și Dunării de Jos, 1979), pp. 134–140; Ion Barnea, *Christian Art in Romania*, 2 (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1979), pp. 16–20 and 46–90; Barnea, "Monumente creștine," pp. 92–106; Damian, Samson, and Vasile, "Complexul," pp. 117–158; Vladimir Agrigoroaei, "Biserica B4 de la Murfatlar: descriere" [B4 Church of Murfatlar: Description], *Nemus* 2–3 (2007–2008), nos. 3–6, pp. 92–120.

55 See Florin Curta, "The Cave and the Dyke: A Rock Monastery of the Tenth-Century Frontier of Bulgaria," *Studia Monastica* 41 (1999), no. 1, pp. 129–149; Alexandru Madgearu, *Byzantine Military Organization on the Danube, 10th–12th Centuries*, (East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450–1450) 22 (Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2013), pp. 24–28.

56 These phases of the quarry exploitation are believed to have quickly followed each other in time—see Barnea, "Les monuments rupestres," p. 189, fig. 8; Barnea, "Dobrogea între anii 681–1186," pp. 223–225; Barnea, "Monumente creștine," p. 105; Damian, Samson, and Vasile, "Complexul," p. 121.

south-western part of 'B3' there are several funeral rooms that communicate with the chapel and 'H' gallery. Another funeral room is situated to the south of 'B4,' communicating with it. 'C1' and 'C2' cells (which communicate between them, whereas 'C1' also with the exterior) were first used as living space and later as funeral rooms.

'E3' and 'E5' chapels, as well as their annexes are situated in the south-west part of the complex. The first ('E3'), of special interest to the present analysis, is almost completely destroyed (photo 1).⁵⁷ It had the plan of an early-Christian basilica (6.00 × 3.50 m) composed (from west to east) of counter-apse/funeral exedra/exonarthex (2.50 × 3.50 m), narthex (1.00 × 2.00 m), naos (1.40 × 2.05 m), and the apse of the altar (1.50 × 1.50 m) (see figs. 15 and 16). The counter-apse has a bench hewn in the chalk massif, at the base of the western arched wall. Like in Dumbrăveni, the counter-apse and the narthex are slightly deviated to the north from the central axis of the basilica. They are separated by two posts hewn in the chalk massif. The naos and the apse of the altar were separated by a railing (also hewn in the chalk massif) with tall pillars here and there, considered an intermediate phase between the cancelli of the early-Christian period and the Byzantine altar screen (iconostasis).⁵⁸ The naos of 'E3' communicated on the northern side with 'G1' funeral gallery, and the apse of the altar with 'E5.'

'E5' is situated to the northeast of 'E3,' toward the chalk massif interior and is composed of naos and altar (fig. 15). There was either a partition wall (of which only the lower part has been preserved) or a cancelli between the naos and the altar.⁵⁹ To the south of 'E3' and 'E5' chapels are 'E1,' 'E2,' and 'E4' rooms and northward 'G1'–'G5' funeral galleries, as well as 'E6' room. The naos of 'E5' communicates on the northern side with the galleries and on the southern one with 'E4.' 'E1' room, of small size, is considered a simple passage room or an annex of 'E2.'⁶⁰ The latter ('E2'), used for living, is placed between 'E1' and

57 According to Rossina Kostova ["Skalniġat manastir pri Basarabi, Severna Dobrudzha: nġakoi problemi na interpretaġiġata" (The Rock Monastery near Basarabi, Northern Dobruja: Some Problems of Interpretation), in *Bŭlgarite v Severnoto Prichernomorie. Izledvaniġa i materialġ*, 7, eds. Petŭr Todorov et al. (Veliko Tarnovo: Universitetsko izdatelstvo "Sv. sv. Kiril i Metodii," 2000), p. 136], E3 chapel collapsed in the early Middle Ages, while the complex was functioning. Ion Barnea and Virgil Bilciurescu ("Ŗantierul arheologic Basarabi," p. 557) considered this possibility, as well.

58 Barnea, *Christian Art*, 2, pp. 18 and 78; Barnea, "Monumente creŖtine," p. 101.

59 Partition wall: Barnea, "Dobrogea ġntre anii 681–1186," p. 191; Barnea and Bilciurescu, "Ŗantierul arheologic Basarabi," p. 556; Barnea, *Christian Art*, 2, p. 18; Barnea, "Monumente creŖtine," p. 103; Rădulescu and Bitoleanu, *Istoria Dobrogei*, p. 178. Cancelli: Damian, Samson, and Vasile, "Complexul," p. 123.

60 Passage room: Barnea and Bilciurescu, "Ŗantierul arheologic Basarabi," p. 552. Annex of E2: Kostova, "Skalniġat manastir," p. 141, n. 15.

'E4,' communicating with them.⁶¹ 'E4,' that communicates also with 'E5,' is supposed to have been first used for living and later as a funeral room.⁶² 'G1'–'G5' galleries, communicating between them and with 'E3' and 'E5,' had a funeral destination, as well. Another funeral room, 'E6,' is situated at the north end of 'G2' gallery.⁶³ In the western part of 'E' area are the remains of a dwelling place ('L1') built of chalk boulders, the only one of this type within the complex.⁶⁴

The complex is dated to the early Middle Ages. Divergent viewpoints among scholars exist only regarding the exact settlement of the chronological interval.⁶⁵ Nevertheless, it may have functioned in two historical phases: Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. Such cases are known in Dobruja at Dumbrăveni (see above), at Petroșani, on Sukha Reka and Dobrich Valleys, and also at Țărlămpaș and Kaliakra (see below). In the case of the complex in Murfatlar, some of the edifices in 'E' area can be attributed to Late Antiquity. Their positioning on the upper terrace of this quarry point and their placement outside the chalk extraction areas during the early Middle Ages enable such a dating.⁶⁶

The main argument that can be invoked in favour of this hypothesis is represented by the counter-apse/western exedra of 'E3.' As already shown, such premises (having a funeral character) are specific to Late Antiquity, but not to the early Medieval period in the Christian east. More than one such funeral space (either counter-apse, exedra, chapel, or niche situated toward the west) is also known in Dobruja: at the rock-cut monastery of Dumbrăveni (see above),

61 Barnea and Bilciurescu, "Șantierul arheologic Basarabi," p. 553; Ion Barnea, "Ceramica din cariera de cretă de la Basarabi" [Ceramics from the Chalk Quarry at Basarabi], *Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche* 13 (1962), no. 2, p. 352.

62 Barnea and Bilciurescu, "Șantierul arheologic Basarabi," p. 556.

63 Within the complex of Murfatlar, the remains of the skeletons of 23 people (in C₁, E4, E6, and in galleries) have been identified. In the case of some of them the sex could be established: 17 men and two women. No children's bones were found—see A. Soficaru, M. Constantinescu, and N. Mirițoiu, "Date antropologice privind materialul osteologic de la Murfatlar-Basarabi" [Anthropological Analysis of the Human Bones from Basarabi-Murfatlar], *Materiale și Cercetări Arheologice* 5 (2009), pp. 159–188.

64 Inscriptions and numerous graffiti-type representations are incised on the walls of the complex in Murfatlar. Similar representations can be seen on the walls of the other rock-cut and cave monastic complexes in Dobruja. However, as most of them (possibly except for some crosses) belong to the early Middle Ages, they are not treated in the present chapter.

65 See Ionuț Holubeanu, *Monahismul în Dobrogea de la origini până în zilele noastre* [The Monasticism in Dobruja from the Origins to the Present] (Bucharest: Editura Universitară, 2020), pp. 193–196.

66 Ion Barnea (*Christian Art*, 2, p. 18) also considered the possibility for E₃ to have been "the oldest of all chapels at Basarabi, perhaps even previous to the quarry itself."

at the cave church near Țăilata, at the cave monastery near Khitovo, at the cave chapel near Tîulenovo, and at the cave church in Kaliakra Cape (see below). They were all hewn in Late Antiquity. It should be noted, then, that if the local monks of Late Antiquity were preoccupied to create such special western funeral spaces,⁶⁷ those of the early Middle Ages did not set up churches with such features. The cases from Dumbrăveni and even Murfatlar are particularly suggestive in this regard. At Dumbrăveni, the monks of the early Middle Ages, who could observe the plan of the old basilica ('B1'), partially preserved, preferred to organize a new one ('B2' basilica) without a counter-apse. The same thing can be noticed at Murfatlar, where none of the other chapels ('B1'–'B4') is provided with a counter-apse or western exedra. In this case, dating the 'E3' chapel to the early Middle Ages would generate a completely unusual situation: the only funeral counter-apse/western exedra constructed at that time in Dobruja and (as far as I know) in the Byzantine Empire. This argues in favour of the dating the chapel 'E3' in Murfatlar also to Late Antiquity.

Another architectural argument that can be invoked to support this dating is the position and form of the narthex of 'E3,' specific also to basilicas in Late Antiquity. This type of narthex (transversely positioned and slightly deviated to the north) can be found at some of the early-Christian basilicas in the Balkan Peninsula, including in Roman Scythia: basilica no. 1 in Argamum (Doloșman Cape, Romania) and 'A' basilica of the monastery in Slava Rusă (see above).⁶⁸ The cancelli of 'E3' and the supposed cancelli of 'E5' also argues in favor of this early dating.

67 The development of the funeral cult in Roman Scythia in the 5th century (proven by the appearance of the western funeral counter-apses/exedrae/niches) may have been directly related to the spread of the teaching about predestination in the province. It is worth noting that such funeral spaces have been identified, until now, only at the churches and chapels of the monasteries.

68 A basilica in Odessos (now Varna, Bulgaria) and one on the territory of modern Koloto (Pernik Region, Bulgaria) also have such a narthex—see Neli Chaneva-Dechevska, *Rannokhristiānskata arkhitektura v Bŭlgariā IV–VI v.* [Early Christian Architecture in Bulgaria 4th–6th Centuries] (Sofia: St. Kliment Ohridski University Press, 1999), pp. 173–178 (figs. 3 and 5) and 317–318 (fig. 109). Geographically, they are the closest basilicas to the territory of Roman Scythia with such a narthex. For the basilica in Argamum, see Ioan Iațu, *Construcții religioase creștine în provincia Scythia: secolele IV–VI p.Chr.* [Christian Religious Constructions in the Province of Scythia: The 4th–6th Centuries AD] (Brăila: Istros, 2012), pp. 44–45 and fig. 2. Ion Barnea ("Dobrogea între anii 681–1186," p. 191) and Petre Diaconu ["Tradiții daco-romane în monumentul rupestru de la Basarabi (jud. Constanța)" (Daco-Roman Traditions in the Rock-Cut Monument at Basarabi), *Symposia Thracologica* 7 (1989), p. 430] also admitted the fact that the plan and the internal division of E3 chapel of Murfatlar represent an exception, imitating those of early-Christian basilicas (for this, see also Chiriac, "Un monument inedit," p. 258). From Diaconu's point of

Moreover, it would be possible for the chalk chalices found within the quarry of Murfatlar to have been from the early Byzantine period (see fig. 18). Actually, certain scholars pointed to the striking similarity between these objects and those made of limestone in the 6th century, known on the territory of Roman Scythia (see fig. 19).⁶⁹ The main counter argument of this dating is the absence of Late Roman/early Byzantine ceramic fragments.⁷⁰ However, this is not a major impediment. It should be noted that initially the ceramic fragments from Late Antiquity were almost unnoticed even in the Dumbrăveni complex.⁷¹ For this reason, the 'B1' church there was first dated to the early Middle Ages.⁷² Only after the discovery of the coin issued in 383 (in 'M5' tomb) was the edifice redated to Late Antiquity and scholars mentioned in their new article the few small contemporary ceramic fragments identified on the ground floor of the complex.⁷³

Some scholars supposed that the counter-apse and the narthex of 'E3' would be a separate room, and not part of the chapel.⁷⁴ Nevertheless, even if this hypothesis is admitted, the form of this room and its position in relation to the rest of 'E3' find their closest analogies also in Late Antiquity, and not in the early Middle Ages, the clearest example being the 'C3' funeral chapel in Khitovo (see fig. 17).

In Late Antiquity, the complex in Murfatlar could have been formed of 'E3' chapel and the southern side annexes ('E1,' 'E2,' and, possibly, 'E4').⁷⁵ Northern

view, this type of architecture had been preserved until the early Middle Ages by means of the local Romanized population. Georgi Atanasov ("Influences ethno-culturelles," p. 117) also considered the possibility for the counter-apse of E3 chapel in Murfatlar to have been a reproduction of those of the early-Christian period.

69 See Petre Diaconu, "Documente vechi creștine în Dobrogea" [Early Christian Documents in Dobruja], *Pontica* 17 (1984), pp. 162–163; Damian, Samson, and Vasile, "Complexul," p. 125, n. 80.

70 Damian, Samson, and Vasile, "Complexul," p. 120, n. 25.

71 Chiriac, "Un monument inedit," pp. 256 and also 258: "There were found only small atypical ceramic fragments ... [and] many early medieval ceramic fragments (Dridu type)."

72 Chiriac, "Un monument inedit," pp. 258 and 264.

73 Chiriac and Papisima, "Un străvechi așezământ," p. 199.

74 Damian, Samson, and Vasile, "Complexul," pp. 122–123.

75 Rossina Kostova ("Skalniāt manastir," pp. 134–138) supposes that in 'E' area first functioned a hermitage, formed of 'E3' and 'E2.' From her point of view, another hermitage (composed of 'B1' and 'C1'–'C2'), possibly older, had existed in 'B' sector. Georgi Atanasov ["Oshite za datirovkata i monasheskata organizatsiā v skalnata obitel do Murfatlar (Basarabi)" (Again on the Dating and Organization of the Monks in the Rock Monastery of Murfatlar-Basarabi), in *Velikotŭrnovskiāt universitet "Sv. sv. Kiril i Metodii" i bŭlgarskata arheologiātata*, 1, ed. Boris Borisov (Veliko Tarnovo: Universitetsko izdatelstvo "Sv. sv. Kiril i Metodii," 2010), pp. 467–468, 470–471, and 473–475] supposes that in Murfatlar were first

side 'G1' gallery must have also existed at that time, whose funeral role is closely related to the existence of the counter-apse/western exedra. It is not excluded that the naos of 'E5' may have been disposed at the same time, having initially the destination of a room.⁷⁶ If the altar and the naos of 'E5' are separated by a cancelli (as some scholars consider), then the whole edifice can be dated to Late Antiquity.

It is not excluded, however, that the monastery may have had two phases of construction (at least) in Late Antiquity, in the first one the monastery was composed only of the eastern half of 'E3' (the narthex, the naos, and the apse of the altar), as well as of 'E1' and 'E2' rooms, the others (the counter-apse/western exedra, 'E4,' 'G1,' and the chapel 'E5') were added in the second phase.

The counter-apse/western exedra of 'E3' must have had a funeral role.⁷⁷ To support this idea, as in the case of the one in Dumbrăveni, the existence of the tombs in its close neighbourhood and of the bench hewn at the base of the apse wall can be invoked. Actually, comparing the general plan of the rock-cut complex in Dumbrăveni (of Late Antiquity) to that of the supposedly contemporary edifices of the 'E' sector in Murfatlar ('E1'-'E4' and 'G1'), the similarity between them can be noticed in the constituent elements: a basilica with counter-apse/western exedra and several tombs close by, a gallery, and some household rooms. The difference is that in Dumbrăveni the annex rooms are situated on the lower level, whereas in Murfatlar they are situated approximately on the same level with the chapel.

Based on the above-mentioned aspects, the hypothesis of the existence of the rock-cut monastery in Murfatlar during the Late Roman and early Byzantine periods can be advanced. It could have been organized in the second half/end of the 4th century: the chapel 'E3' (without counter-apse/western exedra) and rooms 'E1' and 'E2.' Later, in the second half/end of the 5th century, the counter-apse, 'G1' gallery, and rooms 'E4' and 'E5' (including the altar, if it has cancelli) could have been added. It could have stopped its activity toward the end of the 6th century or the beginning of the following one, being reused and extended during the early Middle Ages.

organized 'C1' and 'B1,' then 'B2' and 'B3' (with its annexes), and later 'B4.' From his point of view, the edifices in 'E' area (forming a small coenobium) were organized last.

76 Ion Barnea and Virgil Bilciurescu ("Șantierul arheologic Basarabi," p. 557; "Dobrogea între anii 681–1186," p. 192; "Monumente creștine," p. 103; *Christian Art*, 2, p. 84; "Bisericițele rupestre," p. 139) also consider the possibility for 'E5' to have been a simple room first, turned into a chapel, by setting an altar in its eastern wall, after the collapse of 'E3' and 'E2.'

77 See Barnea, "Dobrogea între anii 681–1186," p. 191; Barnea, "Monumente creștine," p. 103.

In what concerns the form of organization of the monks there during the Late Antiquity, it must have been similar to the one of those in Dumbrăveni. An argument in this regard is the architectural similarity between the two complexes during the early period.

13.5 The Cave Monasteries on Sukha Reka and Dobrich Valleys

In Late Antiquity, much of Sukha Reka River course was the limit between the Roman provinces of Scythia and Moesia Secunda.⁷⁸ In many places, the slopes of this river valley have the aspect of a canyon, reaching heights of up to 40–50 m. In them there are numerous caves, some of them organized as hermitages and monasteries. The southern point of the monastic colony on Sukha Reka Valley is situated on the territory of the modern village of Khitovo (Dobrich Region, Bulgaria), whereas the northern one, on that of present-day Băneasa town (Constanța County, Romania) (see map 9). Between these points, the course of the valley is approximately 50 km long.⁷⁹

13.5.1 *The Cave Monastery in Khitovo*

This cave complex is situated approximately 3.5 km south-east of the present-day village of Khitovo, on the left slope of Sukha Reka Valley (in Moesia Secunda) (map 9). It is difficult to access, as it is placed at a height of 8 m. Its rooms, disposed on the east-west direction, along the rocky massif facade, are set out in two natural caves (fig. 17), transformed and connected by a narrow corridor. The eastern cave was fitted as a chapel ('B') (6.10 × 3.20 × c.2.70 m). In the western one there are three rooms ('C1'–'C3') that communicate between

78 See above, 'Introduction.'

79 For the description of these monuments the following studies were mainly used: Karel Shkorpil and Khernengild Shkorpil, "Severoiztochna Bŭlgariia v geograficheskoto i arheologicheskoto otnoshenie (II)" [Northeastern Bulgaria in Geographical and Archaeological Terms (II)], *Sbornik za Narodni Umotvoreniiã, nauka i knižhnina/The Folklore and Ethnography Collection* 8 (1892), pp. 5–20; Ara Margos, "Svrednovkovni skalni manastiri po Sukha Reka" [Rocky Monasteries along the Banks of Sukha Reka], *Izvestiia na narodniia muzei Varna/Bulletin du Musée National de Varna* 19 (1983), pp. 125–129; Georgi Atanasov, "Skalni manastiri v kraidunavska Dobrudzha" [Rock Monasteries in Danubian Region Dobruja], *Vekove* 15 (1986), no. 6, pp. 9–15; Georgi Atanasov, "Niãkolko skalni manastira v iuzhna Dobrudzha" [Rock Monasteries in South Dobruja], *Izvestiia na narodniia muzei Varna/Bulletin du Musée National de Varna* 25 (1989), pp. 54–62; Georgi Atanasov, "Rannovizantiiski skalni tsurkvi i manastiri v iuzhna Dobrudzha" [Early Byzantine Rock Churches and Monasteries in South Dobruja], *Arkheologiia* 33 (1991), no. 3, pp. 33–43; Atanasov, "Les monastères rupestres" (see above, n. 43), pp. 189–218.

them, succeeding one another. In the pavement of 'C2' are carved a tomb ('M1') and an ossuary ('M2'), whereas in the western wall of 'C3,' two niches of semi-circular section. Their westward disposal, as well as the presence of the tomb and the ossuary in 'C2' indicate the use of 'C3' as a funeral chapel.

The cave complex seems to have functioned as a liturgical space for a monastic community. It is unlikely for the dwellers of the settlement to have lived in these rooms. Their cells were most probably situated in the neighbourhood. Such a situation suggests their organization according to the rule of *laura*.

13.5.2 *The Gîaur Evleri Cave Monastery*

The following cave complexes on Sukha Reka Valley are situated approximately 13 km downstream of that of Khitovo, in the confluence with Dobrich Valley, not far from the present-day villages of Kragulevo, Bakalovo, Onogur, and Balik (Dobrich Region, Bulgaria). Five cave complexes are known there, named Gîaur Evleri, Sandŭkli Maara, Tarapanata, Asar/Khisar Evleri, and Shaîan Kaîa.

Gîaur Evleri cave monastery is situated on the right slope of Dobrich Valley (in Roman Scythia), several hundred metres before its confluence with Sukha Reka (map 9). The complex is composed of a chapel and several cells arranged on three levels (fig. 20). At the lower level there are three rooms preserved at present ('C1'–'C3'),⁸⁰ at the middle one the chapel ('B') and three rooms ('C4'–'C6'), and at the upper one three other rooms ('C7'–'C9'). 'B' chapel is composed of a pronaos, a naos, and the apse of the altar. 'C9' room, of larger dimensions, is considered the common bedroom of the monks in the monastery.⁸¹

At the base of the slope where the complex was organized numerous Late Roman and early Byzantine ceramic fragments (4th–6th centuries) and early Medieval (the end of the 9th–the beginning of the 11th century) have been identified.⁸²

80 Margos, "Svrednovkovni," p. 125. Karel Shkorpil and Khermengild Shkorpil ["Severoiztochna Bŭlgariâ (II)," p. 10], who researched the complex in the second half of the 19th century, mention four cells.

81 Atanasov, *Khristiânskiŭt Durostorom*, p. 112. According to Georgi Atanasov ("Les monastères rupestres," p. 193), rooms C5 and C6 represented another worship place ("the chapel with porch"), while Ara Margos ("Svrednovkovni," p. 126) names them cells 5 and 6.

82 Margos, "Svrednovkovni," pp. 126–127; Georgi Atanasov, *Skalni kultovi pametniŭsi v Dobrudzha. Svetlišhta, khramove, manastiri* [Rock Cult Monuments in Dobruja. Sanctuaries, Temples, Monasteries] (Silistra: RITT—BG Print, 2004), pp. 12–14; Atanasov, *Khristiânskiŭt Durostorom*, pp. 115 and 127 (n. 67); Atanasov, "Les monastères rupestres," pp. 191 (n. 16) and 204.

13.5.3 *The Sandŭkli Maara Funeral Cave Complex*

Sandŭkli Maara cave complex is situated also on the right bank of Dobrich Valley (in Roman Scythia), approximately 300 m downstream from Gĭaur Evleri (map 9). The access to the hermitage was through two successive vertical pits (of rectangular section) (fig. 21). The first starts from a cave situated at the base of the rocky massif. Its upper end goes to a small rest area, from where the second pit begins, whose upper end pierces the 'B' chapel pavement. The total height of the access system is approximately 7 m. Most probably there were wooden stairs inside the two access pits.⁸³

The complex is divided into three sections, arranged on the north-south direction.⁸⁴ In the northern part there is the 'B' chapel (5,70 × 2,35 m) oriented to the west-east direction, whose east and south sides were marked by wooden walls in the old times. A tomb ('M1') is carved in its pavement. Two other tombs ('M2' and 'M3'), as well as an ossuary ('M4'), are set in the central sector, situated southward of 'B' chapel.⁸⁵ The third sector is situated at the southern extremity of the monument, another ossuary ('M5') being located in its pavement.⁸⁶

On account of the tombs and ossuaries present there, it has been supposed that Sandŭkli Maara had a funeral function,⁸⁷ considered the "cemetery" of Gĭaur Evleri.⁸⁸

13.5.4 *The Tarapanata Cave Complex*

The Tarapanata cave complex is situated also on the right slope of Dobrich Valley (in Roman Scythia), approximately 100 m south of Sandŭkli Maara (map 9). It is composed of three rooms ('P1,' 'P2,' and 'C'), organized on two levels.⁸⁹

'P1' room (4.80 × 2.40 × 1.85 m) is situated at the lower level and is oriented approximately to the west-east direction (fig. 22). It may have had the destination of chapel, the eastern part functioning as a naos, and the western one, as a

83 Margos, "Svrednovekovni," p. 127.

84 Margos, "Svrednovekovni," p. 127. Karel Shkorpil and Khernengild Shkorpil ["Severoiztochna Bŭlgariĭa (II)," p. 11], who divided the southern area into two, mention four sections.

85 Margos, "Svrednovekovni," p. 127.

86 Margos, "Svrednovekovni," p. 127.

87 Shkorpil and Shkorpil, "Severoiztochna Bŭlgariĭa (II)," p. 13; Margos, "Svrednovekovni," p. 127.

88 Atanasov, "Rannovizantiĭski skalni űsrkvi," p. 39; Atanasov, "Les monastĕres rupestres," p. 193.

89 Margos, "Svrednovekovni," pp. 127–128.

pronaos. There is a niche in the eastern wall of the supposed naos, which could serve as a holy table. A tomb is carved in its pavement.

'P2' and 'C' rooms, communicating through a corridor, are arranged at the upper level of the complex (fig. 23). 'P2' (2.50 m × 1.95 m × 1.70 m) is supposed to have functioned as a chapel. Its eastern wall preserves a carved niche (holy table) with a semi-calotte shaped ceiling.⁹⁰ A tomb is carved in the pavement of the room.

13.5.5 *The Asar/Khisar Evleri Cave Monastery*

On the left slope of Sukha Reka Valley (in Moesia Secunda), next to the Tarapanata cave complex, there is a hill on whose top are the remains of the Roman fortress of Adina (map 9).⁹¹ The north-western side of the settlement is situated above relatively vertical rocks, reaching the height of 40 m. In this part of the rocky massif there is a group of caves in which the Asar/Khisar Evleri cave monastery is situated. Scholars have proposed that before its settlement there, the caves were part of the defensive system of Adina.⁹²

The rooms of the complex are arranged on two levels, connected by a path that continues to the fortress walls. At the lower level there are five caves arranged by carving ('C1'–'C5'), succeeding each other on the south-north direction, along the facade of the rocky massif. At the upper level there are two churches ('B1' and 'B2'), a funeral chapel ('P'), and two cells ('C6' and 'C7').⁹³ 'B2' and 'P' form a common body, but in the old times they were separated by

90 Margos, "Svrednovekovni," p. 127.

91 Adina fortress was located on the territory of the Roman province of Moesia Secunda, close to the border with Roman Scythia. It is mentioned by Procopius of Caesarea [*De Aedificiis* IV.7.13, in Procopius Caesariensis, *Opera omnia*, 4, eds. Jakob Haury and Gerhard Wirth (Munich/Leipzig: Saur, 2001, p. 132^{18–22}]; *On Buildings* IV.7.13, in Procopius, *On Buildings, History of the Wars, and Secret History*, 7, trans. Henry Bronson Dewing (London: William Heinemann; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 280–283] among the settlements of the region that were renovated during the reign of Justinian I. To identify this city, see Sergey Torbatov, "Procop. De Aedif. IV, 7, 12–14 and the Historical Geography of Moesia Secunda," *Archaeologia Bulgarica* 4 (2000), no. 3, pp. 62–65.

92 Georgi Atanasov, "Peshchernye voenno-strategicheskie sooruzheniia rannevizantiiskoi epokhi v severo-vostochnoi Bolgarii" [Cave Military-Strategic Structures of the Early Byzantine Era in Northeastern Bulgaria], in *Istoriia i arkheologiia ūgo zapadnogo Kryma*, ed. Īurii M. Mogarichev (Simferopol: Tavriia, 1993), p. 72; Torbatov, "Procop. De Aedif." p. 63.

93 Atanasov, "Les monastères rupestres," p. 201.

a brick or a wooden wall (fig. 24).⁹⁴ Three tombs are carved in the pavement of 'P'.

'B1,' considered the main church of the complex (fig. 25), is situated at approximately 200 m to the south of 'B2.' It is composed of three parts (porch/exonarthex, naos, and pronaos), arranged in 'L.' The access was through two successive vertical pits of rectangular section (similar to those at Sandükli Maara), with a total length of 16 m, permitting the access to the porch. In the eastern wall of the naos (3.15 × 4.23 × 1.77 m) a niche is carved, which likely served as a holy table. At the southern extremity of the second level there is 'C7' room, of large size (over 40 m²), considered to have functioned as the common bedroom of the monks living in the monastery (fig. 26).⁹⁵ In the eastern wall of the room, a niche of rectangular shape is carved, with a semi-calotte shaped ceiling. It is believed to have been used for the continual office of the religious services by the monks, after the end of the common liturgical service.⁹⁶

At the base of the rocky massif were discovered ceramic fragments from the 5th–6th centuries.⁹⁷

13.5.6 *The Shaîan Kaîa Cave Complex*

The Shaîan Kaîa cave complex is situated on the left slope of Sukha Reka Valley (in Moesia Secunda), at 3.20 km downstream of Asar/Khisar Evleri monastery (map 9). Not far from the monument, at approximately 600 m toward north-west, there are the remains of the Roman city of Palmatae/Palmatis.⁹⁸

94 Georgi Atanasov ("Rannovizantiïski skalni fšürkvi," p. 39; *Khristiîanskiîat Durostorum*, p. 111; "Les monastères rupestres," p. 193) infers the existence of the separating wall from the nests carved in the ceiling of the monument. Atanasov also considers the possibility for the two worship places to have been arranged successively (first 'B' and then 'P'), the first one being carved in a more careful way. In such a case, it would not be excluded for 'P' to have been arranged in the early Middle Ages.

95 Atanasov, "Rannovizantiïski skalni fšürkvi," p. 39; Atanasov, *Khristiîanskiîat Durostorum*, p. 112; Atanasov, "Les monastères rupestres," p. 201. According to Georgi Atanasov, Asar/Khisar Evleri was the centre of the monastic complexes on Sukha Reka Valley.

96 Atanasov, "Rannovizantiïski skalni fšürkvi," p. 39; Atanasov, *Khristiîanskiîat Durostorum*, p. 112; Atanasov, "Les monastères rupestres," p. 201.

97 Atanasov, "Rannovizantiïski skalni fšürkvi," p. 40.

98 Palmatae city was situated on the territory of the Roman province of Moesia Secunda, close to the border with Roman Scythia. It is mentioned by Procopius of Caesarea (*De Aedificiis* IV.7.12, p. 132^{16–18}; *On Buildings* IV.7.12, pp. 280–281) among the settlements renovated during the reign of Justinian I. Palmatae became an episcopal see under the same emperor, not long before the year 536 [see Ionuț Holubeanu, *Organizarea bisericească în Scythia și Moesia Secunda în secolele IV–VII* (The Ecclesiastical Organization in Scythia and Moesia Secunda in the 4th–7th Centuries) (Bucharest: Basilica, 2018), pp. 178–181].

Shaīan Kaīa is a natural crack in the rock, having the aspect of a gallery. It is about 29 m long and oriented in the north-south direction, along the rocky massif facade. In its walls, rooms, niches, and windows are carved (fig. 27). The first part ('C') of the complex is followed by a sector ($4.10 \times 1.33-0.90$ m) of the end of which two rooms ('A' and 'B') are carved. In the middle of the second sector ('D') ($21.00 \times 1.85-0.65$ m) there is an opening ('E') that perforates the rocky massif facade to the ravine. In the second part of the 'D' sector there is another opening ('F'), that permitted the access to a terrace (partially preserved), where there were more chairs arranged in the rock. Opposite to the 'F' opening, in the western wall of the gallery, a small corridor is carved ($3.00 \times 1.15 \times 1.50$ m). The third sector of the gallery ('K') is 2.00 m long. At the base of the rocky massif were discovered ceramic fragments from Late Antiquity and early Middle Ages.

As form, Shaīan Kaīa cave complex looks like the gallery ('G' refuge corridor) of the rock-cut monastic complex in Dumbrăveni (see fig. 12).⁹⁹

Opposite Shaīan Kaīa there is another rock, known as Iurtluk Kanara. At the end of the 19th century, brothers Karel and Khermengild Shkorpil identified two caves that showed traces of human intervention.¹⁰⁰

13.5.7 *The Vŭlchanova Staīa Cave Church*

At approximately 10 km downstream from Shaīan Kaīa, on the territory of the modern village of Brestniŭsa (Dobrich Region, Bulgaria), a cave church was identified, known today as Vŭlchanova Staīa. It is placed on the left slope of Sukha Reka Valley (in Moesia Secunda), being installed in a natural cave (map 9). It had a triconch plan in the last phase of use (fig. 28). The central part of the naos has an approximately square shape (3.50×3.40 m), its ceiling being vaulted on the west-east direction. In its eastern wall, the apse of the altar (0.95×1.85 m) is carved, at whose base is the holy table. Another apse ($1.05 \times 2.00 \times 1.97$ m) is carved in the northern wall, and a third one (now lost) existed on the southern side. The pronaos was south of the naos, communicating with it through a corridor.¹⁰¹

It is not excluded that in the first phase of existence of the church, the eastern and southern apses might not have existed, whereas the northern one

On the identification of this city and its historical evolution, see Torbatov, "Procop. De Aedif." pp. 58–62; Sergey Torbatov, "The Roman Road Durostorum-Marcianopolis," *Archaeologia Bulgarica* 4 (2000), no. 1, pp. 68–69.

99 Similarly, Atanasov, "Les monastères rupestres," p. 202. Ara Margos ("Svrednovekovni," p. 128) considers that the role of Shaīan Kaīa cave complex is difficult to specify.

100 Shkorpil and Shkorpil, "Severoiztochna Bŭlgariā (II)," p. 20.

101 See Atanasov, "Skalni manastiri," p. 10.

may have been used as an altar. In this case, the church was oriented in the south-north direction (pronaos, naos, altar) at that time. The later arrangement of the eastern apse (either in the 6th century or in the early Middle Ages) is suggested by its carving in a less careful manner, as compared to the one on the northern side.

13.5.8 *The Haïdushki Kūshti Cave Hermitage*

At approximately 7 km north of Vŭlchanova Staĭa, on the left slope of Sukha Reka Valley (in Moesia Secunda), near the now Golesh village (Silistra Region, Bulgaria), there are the remains of another cave monastic complex, known today as Haïdushki Kūshti.¹⁰² Not far from it, on the right slope of the valley, there are the remains of a castrum (4th–6th centuries), identified with Sanctus Cyrillus fortress of Roman Scythia (map 9).¹⁰³

The edifices of the complex (a church and two cells) are arranged on two levels. The church is situated on the ground floor and is oriented to the west-east direction (fig. 29). The cells, which communicate between them and are disposed in natural caves (situated above the church), are accessed through wooden stairs (today lost). Late Roman–early Byzantine ceramic fragments (5th–6th centuries) and early Medieval (8th–11th centuries) have been discovered at the base of the complex, which indicates its activity in these periods.¹⁰⁴

13.5.9 *Sihaștrilor Cave*

Downstream from Haïdushki Kūshti, on the administrative territory of the modern town of Băneasa (Romania), there are other caves (archaeologically unresearched) supposed to have been used by monks. They are situated on the left slope of Canaraua Fetei Valley (the extension of Sukha Reka Valley) (in Moesia Secunda), in a rock formation approximately 25 m high (map 9).¹⁰⁵

102 Georgi Atanasov (“Skalni manastiri,” p. 11, n. 8) specifies that this hermitage is also known as Gĭaur Evleri, like the one near Balik.

103 Sanctus Cyrillus castrum (φρούριον) is mentioned only by Procopius of Caesarea (*De Aedificiis* IV.7.16, pp. 132²⁵–133⁴; *On Buildings* IV.7.16, pp. 282–283), when he described the cities in Roman Scythia rebuilt under Justinian I. The identification of the fortress near Golesh village with Sanctus Cyrillus was advanced by Georgi Atanasov [“De nouveau sur la localisation de la forteresse bas-byzantine St. Cyril en Scythie Mineure,” in *Prinos lui Petre Diaconu la 80 de ani*, eds. Ionel Căndea et al. (Brăila: Istros, 2004), pp. 405–411; “Christianity along the Lower Danube Limes in the Roman Provinces of Dacia Ripensis, Moesia Secunda and Scythia Minor (4th–6th c. AD),” in *The Lower Danube Roman Limes (1st–6th C. AD)*, ed. Lyudmil Vagalinski, Nikolay Sharankov, and Sergey Torbatov (Sofia: NIAM-BAS, 2012), p. 346].

104 Atanasov, “Skalni manastiri,” pp. 10–11; Atanasov, “Les monastères rupestres,” pp. 190 ff.

105 The existence there of a monastery in the period of Late Antiquity is accepted also by Georgi Atanasov (*Skalni kultovi*, pp. 12–14; “Les monastères rupestres,” p. 189).

The complex is composed of three caves along the rocky massif facade, at a height of 15 m from its base. The largest of them, known today as Sihaștrilor Cave (7.50 × 4.30 × 3.20 m), is oriented approximately along the west-east axis (fig. 30). At present, it is widely open to the ravine on all the southern side. This side may have been closed by the rocky massif facade (collapsed later) and the access inside the cave may have been ensured by a horizontal natural gallery (17 m), which is preserved. The other two caves, of smaller dimensions and situated not far from the great one, could have been used as individual cells. Another cave, mostly damaged, is situated at the base of the rocky massif.

13.5.10 *The Dating of the Cave Monastic Complexes on Sukha Reka and Dobrich Valleys*

At present, all scholars admit the use of these complexes in two historical phases: Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages.¹⁰⁶ Their organization in Late Antiquity is sustained by the ceramic fragments of this period found around some of the monuments, by the location of most of them close to fortified settlements of that time, and by their architectural features. As already shown, such ceramic fragments were identified at the base of the rocky massifs that shelter the complexes Gîaur Evleri, Asar/Khisar Evleri, Shaîan Kaîa, and Haïdushki Kûshti. In what concerns their location, four of them (Gîaur Evleri, Sandûkli Maara, Tarapanata, and Asar/Khisar Evleri) are not far from Adina fortress, one (Shaîan Kaîa) near Palmatae, and one (Haïdushki Kûshti) close to Sanctus Cyrillus. The similarity of the general plans of the churches, chapels, and cells, as well as the careful way of arranging them also support their dating in Late Antiquity. To be noticed that the system of access through vertical pits of Asar/Khisar Evleri, first belonging to the military defense system of Adina, was adopted also in Sandûkli Maara and even outside Sukha Reka Valley, at the cave complex in Petroșani (see below). Also, as a general plan, Shaîan Kaîa gallery is similar to that of the rock-cut monastery in Dumbrăveni, dating to Late Antiquity, as well. In the same historical phase, the 'C3' funeral

106 Atanasov, "Rannovizantiiski skalni fșurkvi," pp. 37–41; Atanasov, *Khristiîanskiîat Durostorum*, pp. 111 and 115; Atanasov, "Les monastères rupestres," pp. 190–192, 202, 204, 208, and 217; Chiriac and Papisima, "Un străvechi așezământ," pp. 202–203; Oana Damian, "Aspecte eclesiastice la Dunărea de Jos în secolele VII–X" [Ecclesiastical Aspects at the Lower Danube during the 7th–10th Centuries], *Istros* 9 (1999), p. 133; Damian, Samson, and Vasile, "Complexul" (see above, n. 45), p. 120, n. 25. Ara Margos ("Svrednovkovni," pp. 128–129), one of the first scholars dealing with the dating of these complexes, also admits the possibility for two phases of existence for Asar/Khisar Evleri [early Christian period (4th–5th centuries) and the First Bulgarian Kingdom (10th–11th centuries)] and Shaîan Kaîa [(Late Antiquity and ancient-Bulgarian (8th–9th)].

chapel of Khitovo, similar by its plan and destination to the early-Christian counter-apses, can also be included.

Several aspects must be taken into account in order to establish a dating as precise as possible of the founding and functioning of these complexes. One of them is represented by the disturbances provoked in the region by the Goths and the Huns during the last two decades of the 4th century and the first two of the following one, as well as later, in the middle of the 5th century. It seems unlikely that these cave complexes were arranged during these serious events, which directly affected the life of the whole population of the Roman provinces of the Lower Danube (Scythia and Moesia Secunda). In this case, they were founded either prior to the battle of Hadrianopolis (9 August 378), or after the year 423, when the Huns' robbery raids had ceased in Roman Scythia for almost three decades.¹⁰⁷

Another element to be noted is their austere aspect, specific rather to isolated monastic centres, where the monks, detached from the rest of the world, dedicate themselves to severe asceticism. This is in contrast, however, to the position of more than half of them (six, more exactly) close to civilian and, moreover, fortified settlements. This quite unusual situation could be explained by the fact that the foundation of the monasteries took place at a time when the entire region was under a permanent threat, either from the barbarian populations north of the Danube, or from those settled on the territory of the empire. One of their founders' priorities seems to have been ensuring the monks' security by taking refuge, as quickly as possible, in case of danger, to well defended places. This is a picture that corresponds to the situation in the empire following the Goths' settlement south of the Danube and the Huns' control of the territories on the left of the Danube. This aspect pleads in favour of the organization of most of them in the 5th century. Following this logic, only Khitovo, Vŭlchanova Staia, and Sihastrilor Cave settlements, situated at greater distances from the fortified places of the region, could have had an older existence, prior to the year 378. Nevertheless, in the case of such a dating, it is unlikely for the first two to have had the architectural plan that they have today at that time. The 'C3' funeral chapel of Khitovo, close to a funeral counter-apse, cannot be older than the middle of the 5th century. In this case, it could be admitted that these complexes (Khitovo and Vŭlchanova Staia) had been founded in the third quarter of the 4th century and extended or reorganized either in the second half/the last quarter of the 5th century (when the political-military situation of Scythia stabilized

¹⁰⁷ See Oța, "Hunii în Dobrogea," pp. 363–378.

and other Scythian monasteries—Slava Rusă and, likely, Dumbrăveni—were extended) or even later, under Justinian I.

The placing of most of the monuments close to the settlements in the region could also have another explanation. The caves organized as monasteries may have been first used as places of retreat by certain ascetics. It would be a case similar to that of Casian Cave, which, after the end of the anti-Christian persecutions in the first quarter of the 4th century, was used (most probably) as a place of retreat by some Christians. In this case, the presence of the first ascetics close to the settlements in Sukha Reka and Dobrich Valleys could be dated to the second quarter of the 4th century and they could be included in the category of the ascetics living in the neighbourhood of towns or villages. Later, some of these ascetics or of those who came after them went to more distant places, where they founded isolated hermitages (Khitovo, Vŭlchanova Staĭa, Sihaștrilor Cave), whereas others, by staying, contributed to the foundation of the monasteries there. The development of the latter could be determined also by the tense regional context appeared at the end of the 4th century, which imposed the existence of refuge places for cases of danger.

For the establishment of a chronology as precise as possible for some of the monastic complexes of Sukha Reka and Dobrich Valley, the situation of the fortified settlements in their neighbourhood (Palmatae, Adina, and Sanctus Cyrillus) is also relevant. Palmatae had a continual existence over the 2nd–6th centuries AD. It was renovated and extended during the reign of Emperor Justinian I, raised to the rank of *civitas*/πόλις and to that of episcopal centre (see above). The settlement ceased its existence towards the end of the 6th century or the beginning of the following one.¹⁰⁸ This historical picture gives way to the possibility of the continual use of Shaĭan Kaiā cave complex, situated nearby, from the 4th century to the moment of the city destruction (the end of the 6th—the beginning of the 7th century).

A more complex situation is registered in the case of Sanctus Cyrillus and Adina. Based on archaeological investigations, it was concluded that the first one (built in the first half of the 4th century AD) was destroyed toward the middle of the 5th, during one of the Huns' attacks, and abandoned for approximately 70 years. It was rebuilt (in an extended form) under Justinian I, resisting until the reign of Justin II (565–578), when it was definitively destroyed.¹⁰⁹ This

108 Torbatov, "Procop. De Aedif" p. 62.

109 Atanasov, "De nouveau sur la localisation," p. 409–410; Georgi Atanasov, "Le martyrium, la basilique et le confessio avec des reliques dans le castel bas-byzantin près du village de Goleche, région de Silistra (Durostorum)," *Acta Musei Varnaensis* 4 (2006), pp. 199, 208, 210–213, and 222. See also Sergei Torbatov, *Ukrepitel'nata sistema na provinsĭiā Skitiĭā*

sinuous historical evolution leads to the supposition that the neighbouring Haïdushki Kūshti cave complex functioned intermittently. The ceramic fragments (5th–6th centuries) discovered at the base of the rocky massif where the hermitage is situated suggests its creation during the first phase of existence of the fortress (the second quarter of the 5th century). It seems unlikely, however, that it may have been manage to survive in the middle of the 5th century, when Sanctus Cyrillus was destroyed. It is possible for the hermitage to have been repopulated in the last quarter of the 5th century, when Scythia experienced a more peaceful period, and later under Justinian I, when Sanctus Cyrillus was rebuilt. Moreover, based on the dating of the fortress end, it may be supposed that the abandonment of the hermitage in the early Byzantine period occurred at the same time (the reign of Justin II).

The historical evolution of Adina is less known, because no archaeological researches were done there. In its case, of importance are the details provided by Procopius of Caesarea in *De Aedificiis*. They show that Adina was repaired (‘καινουργέω’), but not built *a fundamentis* by Emperor Justinian I.¹¹⁰ This means that the fortress had been destroyed some time before and then abandoned. The event may have been the result of the Huns’ attack in the middle of the 5th century, when Sanctus Cyrillus, situated close by, was also destroyed. As in the case of Haïdushki Kūshti cave complex, the monasteries there (Gīaur Evleri, Sandūkli Maara, and Tarapanata) must have been abandoned at the time. It is also possible for them to have been repopulated in the last quarter of the 5th century. The situation of the Slava Rusā monastery reveals that this was a favorable period for the monastic life in the province.

Procopius also mentions that before the rebuilding of Adina, there were Sclaveni (i.e., early Slavic tribes) in that area, who attacked the travellers passing through the region.¹¹¹ In these conditions, it is unlikely for the monasteries situated very close to the fortress to have been used at that time. The monastic tradition could have again resumed only after the rebuilding of Adina and the

(*Kraïā na III–VII v.*) [The Defence System of the Late Roman Province of Scythia (The End of the 3rd–the 7th Century A.D.)] (Veliko Tamovo: Faber, 2002), p. 314.

110 On Adina and the meaning of the term ‘καινουργέω’ in Procopius’ fragment, see Torbatov, “Procop. De Aedif.” pp. 62–65.

111 Procopius Caesariensis, *De Aedificiis* IV.7.13, p. 132^{18–22}; Procopius of Caesarea, *On Buildings* IV.7.13, pp. 282–283: “καὶ φρούριον Ἀδὶνα καινουργήσας ἐδείματο, ἐπεὶ διηνεκὲς διαλανθάνοντες Σκλαβηνοὶ βάρβαροι ἐνταῦθα ἐνεδρεύοντές τε κεκρυμμένως αἰεὶ τοὺς τῆδε διαἄβατα ἐποίουν τὰ ἐκείνη χωρία” (“Close to this [i.e., Palmatae] he [i.e., Justinian I] rebuilt also the fort named Adina [our translation here], because the barbarian Sclaveni were constantly laying concealed ambuscades there against travellers, thus making the whole district impassable”). Adina was placed not far (c.3.0 km) from an important regional route (Durostorum–Marcianopolis)—see Torbatov, “Procop. De Aedif.” pp. 62–63.

chasing of the barbarians from those places. Most probably at the same time, to protect the monks from any other threats, they were given the caves on the steep slope of the fortress, where a new monastic cave complex (Asar/Khisar Evleri) was organized. Their use as a monastery before the destruction of Adina by the Huns seems unlikely, as they were part of the military defense system of the fortress. Their ceding to a monastic community must have taken place in a period when Christianity imposed itself as a dominant religion within the empire and, moreover, in which the church hierarchy had an important role within the local administration. This aspect corresponds to the reign of Justinian I. Furthermore, the organization of Asar/Khisar Evleri monastery in the close neighbourhood of the city, in order to save the monks in case of any imminent danger is part of this emperor's preoccupation with granting the security of the citizens in the border provinces of the empire against barbarian attacks. Consequently, Asar/Khisar Evleri was most probably organized after 527. It is difficult to say if the old monastic complexes on the neighbouring slope (Gîaur Evleri, Sandükli Maara, and Tarapanata) were used again at the time. The ceramic fragments (4th–6th centuries) found near Gîaur Evleri pleads in favour of their being used. Regarding the abandonment of Asar/Khisar Evleri monastery (and of the other three, in case they were used again starting with the reign of Justinian I), it can be linked to the destruction of Adina fortress, at the end of the 6th century.¹¹²

The settling of some groups of barbarians in Sukha Reka and Dobrich Valleys, according to Procopius' testimony, confirms the idea stated earlier on about the importance of the refuge places for the monks in the region. This also constitutes an argument in favour of the supposition that in troubled times only the monastic complexes neighbouring functional fortified settlements were inhabited. In this case, a continual use may be supposed only for Shaîan Kaîa, situated not far from Palmatae.

To conclude, it is possible that some ascetics lived in Sukha Reka and Dobrich Valleys in the second quarter of the 4th century. It is also possible for some monastic complexes there to have their origins in the third quarter of the 4th century, before the Goths' settlement south of the Danube and their revolt at the end of Valens' reign. Later, in the second quarter of the 5th century, when the tensions provoked in the region by the Goths and Huns diminished, new monastic complexes could have been created (Haïdushki KÛshti) and the old ones extended. Some of them (Haïdushki KÛshti, Gîaur Evleri, Sandükli Maara, Tarapanata) were abandoned due to the barbarian attacks in the middle of the 5th century. It is possible for them to have been reused and even extended

112 Torbatov, "Procop. De Aedif." p. 65.

(Khitovo) in the last quarter of the 5th century. The last great flourishing of monastic life on both valleys in Late Antiquity occurred during the reign of Justinian I. The abandonment of all these monasteries took place toward the end of the 6th century, in the time of the great Avar and Slavic incursions. The complexes were used again in the early Middle Ages.

13.5.11 *The Organization of the Monks*

The organization of the monks in the monasteries in the two valleys seems to have been diverse. The presence of large size cells at Asar/Khisar Evleri ('C7') and at Gîaur Evleri ('C9') suggests the existence of coenobia there.¹¹³ Beside these common cells, there were some of smaller size, probably used by the community leaders, as well as others, placed at greater distances, where the experienced monks took shelter.¹¹⁴ Most probably the latter took part in liturgical services officiated within the monastery at the end of the week and during great feasts.

Other complexes seem to have been laurae. The one in Khitovo may be included in this category. That seems to have been the centre of a community of monks living isolated in the neighbouring valleys. The isolated position of the complex suggests this form of organization.

The fact that most of the complexes were not far from civilian settlements suggests the strong influence that the monks exerted on the religious life of the Christians in the region. This proximity can also account for the monastic centres' economic dependence on the respective settlements.

Regarding the number of monks living in each of these complexes, it was appreciated in the case of those from Balik village area at 15–20 people at most for each of them.¹¹⁵ This estimation was made based on the relatively small sizes of the worship places and of the common cells.

13.6 The Cave Monastery Near Petroșani

Other caves furnished for living are known in the southern part of the former Roman province of Scythia, near the modern village of Petroșani (Deleni Commune, Constanța County, Romania) (map 9). Only one of them, located approximately 1 km south of the village, has been briefly examined by

113 See Atanasov, "Rannovizantiiski skalni fšŕkvi," pp. 39–40; Atanasov, *Khristiŕanskiŕat Durostorum*, p. 61; Atanasov, "Les monastères rupestres," pp. 193, 201, and 204–206.

114 See also Atanasov, *Khristiŕanskiŕat Durostorum*, p. 112.

115 Atanasov, "Les monastères rupestres," pp. 201 and 205.

archaeologists so far. The ceramic fragments identified around it led to the conclusion that it had been repeatedly used from the Neolithic period until the early Middle Ages.¹¹⁶

Most of the caves are in the western side of the village, in the rocky slope of a valley (photo 2). A complex organized on two levels is found among them. The lower level is situated at a height of approximately 6.50 m from the base of the massif and access to it was made by a vertical pit of rectangular section (3.45 m high), rock-carved, similar to those of Sandŭkli Maara and Asar/Khisar Evleri (see above). The upper end of the access pit leads to a long room, oriented east-west. In its eastern side there is another room, of smaller size, carefully arranged through carving, having in the north-east corner a (rock-carved) seat similar to a nook bench and in the north wall a semicircular niche. South of the central room, there is a small size passage area. In its pavement, two grooves were carved, which likely served to anchor beams used as a resistance structure for an external wooden annex (balcony or access stairs). The (vaulted) ceiling of the passage area is pierced by an opening permitting the access to a small cave (probably used for living), situated at the upper level of the complex.

In the same rocky massif, both to the west and to the east, there are other caves furnished for living. Some of them have well finished walls and inside them there are benches or seats hewn in the rock of the massif.

Similar rocky slopes, pierced by caves, are also found along the rest of the course of the valley. Archaeological investigations have not yet been carried out in their case, either. An extended monastic colony might have been there, similar to the one at Sukha Reka.

Regarding the dating of these monuments, they are most probably contemporary with those at Sukha Reka and Dobrich Valleys, and with the one in Dumbrăveni. The vertical access pit suggests their organization in Late Antiquity. In what concerns the reuse of the monuments in the early Medieval period, the ceramic fragments identified in the cave south of the village suggest this function.

13.7 Saint Apostle Andrew Cave

Also in south Dobruja, near the present-day village of Ion Corvin (Constanța County, Romania), there is a cave known as St. Ap. Andrew Cave ("Peștera Sf.

116 Nicolae Harțuche, "Contribuții la repertoriul arheologic al Dobrogei" [Contributions to the Archaeological Repertoire of Dobruja], *Pontica* 4 (1971), p. 260.

Ap. Andrei”) (map 9). Based on the apse disposed in its western side (similar by plan and orientation to the counter-apses of early-Christian basilicas), Georgi Atanasov has proposed that it had been used as a funeral chapel in Late Antiquity (5th–6th centuries).¹¹⁷ As already shown, such liturgical spaces are known in Dobruja at Dumbrăveni (‘B1’), Khitovo (‘C3’), Kaliakra Cape, Țailata, Tîulenovo, and Murfatlar (‘E3’).

St. Ap. Andrew Cave (fig. 31) is placed on the steep and forested slope of a valley oriented to the south-east–north-west direction. The cave is composed of three small rooms (7.80 × 6.00 m; 8.80 × 3.50 m; 2.00 × 3.30 m), oriented east-west. The cave is part of a modern monastery at present (Sf. Ap. Andrew Monastery/Mănăstirea Sf. Ap. Andrei). Ceramic fragments were found while the construction work for the chapel of the present-day monastery were underway. Unfortunately, they were lost, without being analyzed by archaeologists.

Approximately 250 m southeast of the cave, along the same slope of the valley, there are two other caves, superposed. Furthermore, in the southern side of the hill, at approximately 2 km (in a straight line) southwest of St. Ap. Andrew Cave, there are two other caves. None of them has been archaeologically researched. It is not excluded that they may have formed a small monastic colony in Late Antiquity and/or in the early Medieval period. The future will show if their archaeological evaluation to come will confirm this supposition.

13.8 The Cave Complex in Kaliakra Cape

On the rocky shore of the Black Sea, in the area between Kaliakra Cape (Dobrich Region, Bulgaria) and the present Romanian-Bulgarian border, numerous natural caves have been mapped, some of which show marks of human intervention. Beside them, there are also rooms completely carved in the rocky shore. Some of them were furnished and used by the monks as chapels or dwellings. Others are supposed to have had various other functions.¹¹⁸ Below, the monuments whose monastic function has been accepted or supposed by scholars are presented.

In the natural caves of Kaliakra Cape (Bulgaria), where the ancient city of Akres (in Roman Scythia) was found, there is a chapel and a complex formed of several rooms. The chapel, oriented approximately west-east, is composed of a naos and a circular altar (fig. 32). The naos is deviated to the north from the

117 Atanasov, *Skalni kultovi*, pp. 18–19; Atanasov, *Khristiânskiât Durostorum*, p. 114; Atanasov, “Les monastères rupestres,” p. 203.

118 Atanasov, “Niâkolko skalni manastira,” p. 58.

axis of the altar and of the entrance from the outside. In its western wall there is a niche similar to a counter-apse.¹¹⁹ Other niches are carved in the northern and eastern walls of the room; in the southern one there is a bench.

The cave complex (fig. 33) is situated in the southern extremity of Kaliakra Cape, in the rocky shore.¹²⁰ Its rooms are disposed on two sides, oriented in the north-south direction. Both the western and eastern sides are formed of three rooms ('C I'-'C III' and 'C V'-'C VII,' respectively). The two sides are connected approximately in the middle of their length, by a transversely positioned room ('C IV'), to the east-west direction. The entrance to the complex was from northwest, on a path with steps carved in the rocky massif. At its end there was the central room of the western side of the complex. Niches are set in the walls of some of the rooms and a tomb is carved in the pavement of 'C III.'

The first phase of activity of this possible monastic complex is dated to the 5th–7th centuries.¹²¹ Given its location within the city of Akres, it can be included in the category of urban monasteries. It would not be excluded that its foundation may have been determined by the establishment of an episcopal see there, in 536.¹²² The decline of the monastery must have occurred when the city was destroyed and abandoned in the middle of the second decade of the 7th century.¹²³

13.9 The Cave Complexes in řailata

The remains of cave complexes were identified also on the territory of the modern village of Kamen Brřag (Dobrich Region, Bulgaria), at the place called řailata (map 9). In the north-eastern extremity of the plateau there, right on the high and rocky shore of the Black Sea, there was also a fortress in Late Antiquity. It had been built at the end of the 5th century or the beginning of

119 Atanasov, "Rannovizantiřski skalni řšŭrkvi," p. 36; Atanasov, "Les monastères rupestres," p. 203.

120 The complex, almost inaccessible today, is described by Karel Shkorpil and Khernengild Shkorpil ["Severoiztochna Bŭlgariřa v geografichsko i arheologichsko otnoshenie (1)" [Northeastern Bulgaria in Geographical and Archaeological Terms (1)], *Sbornik za Narodni Umotvoreniřa, nauka i knizhnina/The Folklore and Ethnography Collection 7* (1892), pp. 75–77], from whose study were taken the data discussed here.

121 Atanasov, "Rannovizantiřski skalni řšŭrkvi," pp. 36–39; Atanasov, "Les monastères rupestres," p. 203; Damian, "Aspecte ecleziastice," p. 133; Damian, Samson, and Vasile, "Complexul," p. 120, n. 25.

122 See above, subchapter 3.3: 'The first ordinary bishoprics in the Roman province of Scythia.'

123 Torbatov, *Ukrepitelnata sistema*, p. 232.

the following one and destroyed toward the end of the 6th or the beginning of the 7th, during the inroads of the Avars and Slavs.¹²⁴

At the end of the 19th century, brothers Karel and Khermengild Shkorpil inventoried in the area over 150 rooms arranged in caves, the use of some of them by monks being accepted without reserve. The most representative of them are presented below.¹²⁵

In the northern rocky massif of Īailata there is a cave complex whose rooms are disposed on two levels. On the lower one there is a cave (4.00 × 2.70 × 2.30 m) furnished for living, oriented in the east-west direction. At the upper level there are several other caves, less carefully arranged.

There is another cave complex, known as Klise Maara, in the eastern part of the central massif of Īailata. It is composed of three caves, artificially extended, with the aspect of rooms that communicate between them (fig. 34), oriented in the north-south direction. The northern room pavement preserves early Byzantine ceramic fragments.¹²⁶ In the western wall of the central room, a well finished niche is carved. The third and largest room (14.10 × 7.90 × 1.67 m), situated toward the south, has the walls of the western half well finished. At the upper level of the complex there was another cave furnished for living. The concentration of the rooms in the same rocky massif and the connections between them indicated to scholars that a hermitage was active there.¹²⁷

In the third rocky massif of Īailata there is a natural cave with three arms, arranged in the form of clovers. The cave, furnished for living, is known today as “Sts. Constantine and Helena Church” (fig. 35). The access to the cave is from south-east, by two entrances. They lead to a central hall (‘C II’), that opens into three rooms (‘C I,’ ‘C III,’ and ‘C IV’). The north-eastern room (‘C IV’) ceiling is pierced by a conical shape chimney-like opening. The three rooms are considered as simple living cells.¹²⁸

Approximately 30 m south of these, there is another arranged cave, oriented approximately east-west (6.90 × 4.20 × 2.10 m). In its north-western corner there is a rock-cut bench.¹²⁹

124 Torbatov, *Ukrepitelnata sistema*, pp. 215–220.

125 For the description of the cave complexes of Īailata and Tīulenovo were used the studies: Shkorpil and Shkorpil, “Severioiztochna Būlgariā (1),” pp. 48–83; Atanasov, “Nīakolko skalni manastira,” pp. 57–61; Atanasov, “Rannovizantiiski skalni fšūrki,” pp. 33–43.

126 Atanasov, “Nīakolko skalni manastira,” p. 58; Atanasov, “Rannovizantiiski skalni fšūrki,” p. 40.

127 Atanasov, “Nīakolko skalni manastira,” p. 58.

128 Atanasov, “Nīakolko skalni manastira,” p. 60.

129 Atanasov, “Nīakolko skalni manastira,” pp. 60–61.

A vast monastic cave complex is situated right in the high and rocky shore of the Black Sea, east of Klise Maara. It is oriented to the south-west–north-east. Due to the process of shore erosion and to earthquakes, the eastern part of the monument collapsed into the Black Sea. Only three sectors of the old complex are partially preserved at the present moment (fig. 36). The southern sector is composed of three caves. The southern one, carefully arranged, is considered to have functioned as a chapel. In its eastern half there were the naos and the apse of the altar, and in the western one, the pronaos. The south-western wall of the pronaos is shaped as a semicircular apse, with the ceiling (less high than the rest of the room) in the form of a semi-calotte. By its aspect and orientation, this part of the edifice is similar to the counter-apses in Late Antiquity.¹³⁰

The monks' cells are situated in the eastern part of the chapel, being lined on the west-east direction, along the rocky shore facade. In front of them, on the southern side, there was a large corridor (partially preserved) that permitted communication between them and the chapel, also protecting them from bad weather.¹³¹ Two cells ('C1' and 'C2') are still preserved in the eastern sector and in the following one six cells ('C3'–'C8'). Between 'C4' and 'C5' there is a rock-cut path that permits the connection with the plateau above the complex. The third sector preserved includes two cells ('C9' and 'C10'). Another cell ('C11') (fig. 37) is situated at approximately 27 m north-east of the last two. The access to it was from the plateau above the monastery, via a corridor. Two other cells ('C12' and 'C13') (fig. 38), considered the northern point of the monastery,¹³² were identified at approximately 40 m from 'C11' cell. They were also accessed by a path descending from the plateau above them. They are preceded by a common antechamber. In its eastern wall two niches are arranged, whose existence was related to the office of the liturgical service.¹³³

The architectural plan of this monastery corresponds to the needs of the community for monastic life. The isolated cells that gravitated around it are supposed to have been inhabited by certain experienced monks, who had retreated from the monastery aiming at reaching a deeper spiritual life.¹³⁴ Actually, this monastic system (a coenobium surrounded by the experienced monks' cells) seems to have been prevalent in ĩailata.

130 See also Atanasov, "Rannovizantiiski skalni řürkvi," p. 36; Atanasov, "Les monastères ruprestres," p. 203.

131 Atanasov, "Nĩakolko skalni manastira," p. 59.

132 Atanasov, "Nĩakolko skalni manastira," p. 59.

133 Atanasov, "Nĩakolko skalni manastira," p. 60.

134 See also Atanasov, "Nĩakolko skalni manastira," pp. 58 and 61.

In what concerns the dating of these monuments, ceramic fragments from the early Byzantine period, found in some of the rooms, as well as the plan of the complexes, indicate their organization in Late Antiquity. The counter-apse of the chapel on the seashore could have been set out in the second half/the end of the 5th century. It is possible, like the other monastic complexes in the province (Slava Rusă, Dumbrăveni, Sukha Reka, and Dobrich Valleys), that these monuments may have been partially organized in the second half/third quarter of the 4th century and were subsequently extended in the second half/last quarter of the 5th century or in the following one. They ceased to exist toward the end of the 6th–the beginning of the 7th century and were used again in early Medieval period.¹³⁵

13.10 The Cave Complexes Near Tîulenovo

About 6.5 km north of Țailata, on the rocky shore of the Black Sea, on the administrative territory of the modern village of Tîulenovo (Bulgaria) (map 9), there are the remains of other possible monastic cave complexes, known as Koîun Maara, Delikŭ Maara, and Merdevenli Maara.

The Koîun Maara Cave (fig. 39), arranged for living and damaged due to the process of soil erosion from the end of the 19th century, is accessible on a narrow path that starts from south, from the plateau above it. The cave is made of three rooms almost succeeding one another along the west-east direction, along the rocky shore. They are connected via a corridor that separates them from the rocky facade. The eastern rooms are preceded by a hall with the aspect of an antechamber.

The Delikŭ Maara complex (fig. 40) is composed of five sectors. The access to the main one was made by a rock-carved vertical chimney-like opening (of circular section, 3 m high and 1 m in diameter), that pierces the cave ceiling near its south-western wall. The sector has a triangular plan, its south-eastern side being entirely open to the Black Sea, as a result of the rocky shore facade collapse. On each of the other two sides (western and northern) three rooms are carved. The other sectors are situated toward the south-west (three of them) and north-east (only one). They communicated with the main one by paths disposed along the rocky shore edge. In each of the first two south-western sectors, two rooms are arranged, whereas the third forms one

135 On the dating of these monastic cave complexes, see also Atanasov, "Nĭakolko skalni manastira," pp. 60–61; Atanasov, "Rannovizantiĭski skalni fšŭrkvi," pp. 36–41; Atanasov, "Les monastères rupestres," p. 203; Damian, "Aspecte ecleziastice" (see above, n. 106), p. 129.

room. The north-eastern sector forms one room. Early Byzantine ceramic fragments were identified inside the complex, contributing to the dating of the edifice.¹³⁶

Merdevenli Maara complex (fig. 41), situated south of Delikü Maara, is formed of several rooms oriented approximately to north-south, arranged into a cave. The access was made from the high plateau of the sea shore, on a path with rock-cut steps and continued with a small passage corridor. At the end of the latter there was the first room of the complex. In its western side two cells are cut, toward the interior of the rocky massif. On the southern side, it communicates with three other succeeding rooms. In the pavement of the third one, two circular pits are carved, similar to *dolia* vessels of the ancient times. Their existence reveals the use of the room as a storage space.¹³⁷

Several smaller caves, fitted for living or for food storage, were also identified close to these complexes. They are known as Gülü Maara, Terzi Maara, Kazanlú Maara, Chakülü Maara, Koün Maara II, and Derekli Maara.¹³⁸ In the pavement of Kazanlú Maara Cave are carved other *dolia*, similar to those of Merdevenli Maara. They were dated in Late Antiquity.¹³⁹

On the territory of Tūlenovo village (Bulgaria) there is also a cave chapel. It is composed of two rooms (naos and altar) oriented south-west–north-east (fig. 42). The (circular) altar is situated north-east of the naos, the two rooms communicating through a narrow opening. In the south-western wall of naos there is a niche disposed, similar in aspect and position to the counter-apses of Late Antiquity.¹⁴⁰

The cave complexes of Tūlenovo have been dated to the 5th–7th centuries.¹⁴¹

13.11 Urban Monasteries

Urban monasteries are also attested on the territory of Roman Scythia. The clearest example of this type is registered in Kaliakra Cape. As already shown, within the city (Akres) there was a possible monastery, organized in the natural caves of the rocky promontory. As in the case of Asar/Khisar Evleri

136 Atanasov, "Rannovizantiiski skalni fsürkvi," p. 40.

137 Atanasov, "Rannovizantiiski skalni fsürkvi," p. 40.

138 They are briefly described by Karel and Khermengild Shkorpil ["Severoiztochna Bŭlgariã (1)," pp. 53 and 55].

139 Atanasov, "Rannovizantiiski skalni fsürkvi," p. 40.

140 Atanasov, "Rannovizantiiski skalni fsürkvi," p. 36.

141 Atanasov, "Rannovizantiiski skalni fsürkvi," p. 36.

monastery, its foundation must have taken place in a period when Christianity had imposed itself as a dominant religion within the empire and, moreover, when church hierarchy had an important role within the local administration. In the case of Akres, the possibility of its creation shortly after the foundation of the episcopal see of the city (year 536) could be considered.

Certain scholars supposed the existence of an urban monastery in the early Byzantine period also in Histria, in *Domus* neighbourhood (fig. 43).¹⁴² Within the same complex, the episcopal residence (*episcopium*) of the city is also supposed to have been located there. The coenobium could have been established shortly after the foundation of the episcopal see of the city (year 536). The archaeologists who researched the remains of the complex have suggested that the monks there were involved also in social activities (such as giving shelter to pilgrims), carried out at the episcopal centre.¹⁴³

As already shown in the beginning of this chapter, it is possible for a coenobium to have functioned in (L)Ibida during the last years of existence of the city.¹⁴⁴ Its community might have been formed of those who lived in the former monastery neighbouring the city. They may have settled in the city as a result of the inroad of the Avars and Slavs of 591/592, for security reasons. Future archaeological research will help confirm this hypothesis.

Georgi Atanasov considers the possibility for an urban monastery to have existed also in Callatis (now Mangalia, Romania), near the 'Syrian' basilica.¹⁴⁵

In favour of the existence of a monastery in Tomi (now Constanța, Romania), the election as metropolitan of one of the Scythian monks in the second quarter of the 6th century can be invoked. Several monks must have been part of his entourage, which could have led to the organization of a monastery in the metropolis (if it had not existed before), where they could take shelter. To locate this hypothetical monastic complex, the north-west sector of the metropolis could be considered, protected by an extension of the defensive

142 Emilian Popescu, *Christianitas Daco-Romana. Florilegium studiorum* (Bucharest: Editura Academiei Române, 1994), pp. 323–324; Lungu, *Creștinismul*, pp. 71–72; Octavian Bounegru and Virgil Lungu, "Histria. Cercetări recente în cartierul Domus" [Histria. Recent Explorations in the Domus District], *Studii și Cercetări de Istorie Veche și Arheologie* 54–56 (2003–2005), pp. 171–172. Contra: Robert Born, *Die Christianisierung der Städte der Provinz Scythia Minor ein Beitrag zum spätantiken Urbanismus auf dem Balkan*, (Spätantike—Frühes Christentum—Byzanz. Reihe B, Studien und Perspektiven) 36 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2012), p. 103.

143 Bounegru and Lungu, "Histria," pp. 175–176; see also Popescu, *Christianitas Daco-Romana*, p. 323.

144 See above, subchapter 13.2: 'The monastery near the ancient city of (L)Ibida.'

145 Atanasov, "Rannovizantijski skalni fšürkvi," pp. 37–38. In this study, Atanasov dates the 'Syrian' basilica in Callatis toward the end of the 5th or, more probable, in the 6th century.

wall in the 5th–6th centuries. Two worship places are known in this sector (the large basilica and the small basilica), situated at 50 m distance from one another. Certain scholars have proposed the existence there of the Tomi *episcopium* of that time, others of a memorial complex.¹⁴⁶ In both cases, the existence of a monastery (or at least of some monks) would be possible, but there is yet no archaeological evidence to support this hypothesis.

It is possible for the other episcopal centres where the existence of a monastery is attested or supposed [Histria, Callatis, (L)Ibida] to have had bishops come from among the local monks. Furthermore, it is not excluded for similar monasteries to have existed also in other cities of the province, which became episcopal centres in the year 536 or later.¹⁴⁷ It seems plausible that some of the suffragan bishops may have copied the model of the metropolitan centre in Tomi. Moreover, the existence of several monks in diocesan centres, directly involved in supporting the hierarch's multiple activities and the social ones carried out under his patronage, became almost a necessity in the 6th century. This hypothesis needs to be confirmed by future archaeological research.

146 *Episcopium*: N. Cheluță-Georgescu, "Contribuții la topografia Tomisului în sec. VI e.n." [Contributions to Tomis Topography in the 6th Century AD], *Pontica* 10 (1977), pp. 258–259; Adrian Rădulescu, "Zidul de apărare al Tomisului, de epocă târzie, în reconstituirea sa actuală" [The Late Defensive Wall of Tomi in Its Present Reconstruction], *Pontica* 28–29 (1995–1996), pp. 83–93. Memorial complex: Born, *Die Christianisierung*, pp. 51–52.

147 Ioana Bogdan Cătănicu ["Semnificația ultimelor schimbări în urbanismul de la Tropaeum Traiani" (The Meaning of the Latest Changes in the Urbanism of Tropaeum Traiani), *Pontica* 28–29 (1995–1996), p. 214], based on some late tombs found at Tropaeum Traiani around 'C' basilica, considers also the possibility that, after the destruction of this city by the Avars and Slavs, a community of monks might have continued living on its remains. Still, it seems more likely that they were some of the ordinary inhabitants of the settlement, who lived for a while among its remains.

Conclusions

Monastic life in Roman Scythia crystallized a few decades after monasticism had been recognized as a special way of living within the Church in the Eastern provinces of the Roman Empire. As in other cases, organized monasticism had been preceded in the Lower Danube by the category of ascetics living set on the outskirts of towns or villages. The first such case attested in documents is that of martyrs Epictet and Astion, who arrived in Scythia from the eastern part of Asia Minor in the year 287. This pre-monastic movement was sustained in the first half of the 4th century by Christian missionaries from the eastern regions of the empire. However, due to the lack of more detailed information, it is difficult to appreciate how much their style of life contributed to the growth of the local pre-monastic movement.

It is possible that several Christian ascetics may have lived in Casian Cave from Dobruja Gorge in the first half of the 4th century. At the same time, such cases may have appeared also in the caves of the rocky valleys in the southern part of the province [on the Sukha Reka-Canaraua Fetei (Bulgaria and Romania) and Dobrich Valleys (Bulgaria) and near now Dumbrăveni (Romania) and Petroșani (Romania)] (see map 9), but there is no clear archaeological evidence to support this hypothesis. It is also possible that Novatian ascetics had lived in the province since the first half of the 4th century.

The Audians are the first monks attested through documents in the province. Their leader, Audius, was exiled in Scythia after the Synod of Antioch (341). However, their contribution to the development of monastic life there seems to have been irrelevant.

The oldest monastic complexes archaeologically attested in Roman Scythia are the ones near ancient (L)Ibida (now Slava Rusă, Romania) and Dumbrăveni, both dated to the second half of the 4th century. The first hermitages on the Sukha Reka and Dobrich Valleys, near Petroșani and, possibly, Murfatlar (Romania), might have been set up at the same time. The oldest written information about some of the monks in the province, provided by Saint John Cassian, is from the same period. According to him, the Egyptian type of anchoritism was less known in Scythia at that time. Correlated with archaeological data, this information suggests the existence in the province of certain monastic communities, with a small number of dwellers.

The Basilian monastic rule was implemented in Scythia also in the second half of the 4th century, at the time of Bishop Vetrano of Tomi (c.367–c.374) or of Theotimus I of Tomi (c.390–c.407), at the latest. This reorganization must

have led, on the one hand, to a more and more active contribution of the monks in the province to charitable activities and, on the other hand, to the transfer of all monasteries under the direct supervision of the metropolitans of Tomi.

Theotimus I is also the first hierarch of Tomi undoubtedly known to have been a monk. He actually came from one of the monasteries in the province. His election, as one of the local monks, in the metropolitan see of Tomi may be regarded as the act of integration or of officialization of monasticism in the church life of the province. With him, monasticism left the private sphere and passed on to the public one, becoming one of the leading institutions of the Church in Roman Scythia. As such, monasticism became more and more present in the everyday life of the Christians (by education, the implication in charitable activities, and in preaching the Christian faith) and received a central role in the life of the local Church (by defending the doctrine of faith and the occupation of the leading functions within it). Theotimus I is also the one who tried raising the Scythian monks' level of spiritual living, although this seems to have been not a complete success there.

Monastic life in Scythia was deeply affected by the theological reform implemented by Timothy of Tomi (c.431) after the First Council of Ephesus (431). Very likely confusing the local teaching on grace with Pelagianism, he promoted the Augustinian soteriology (including the doctrine on unconditional predestination) in his Church. As a consequence, the monastic life in the province faced a process of spiritual decline. The monks left the empirical theology, based on the hesychastic spiritual experience (promoted by Theotimus I of Tomi), and embraced that of a scholastic type, dominated by human logic-based axioms and unverified by experience. Thus, the intense human-God relationship was abandoned and replaced by a pietist experience, centred on external asceticism (probably physical work, strict observance of church rules, concentration on the monk's external behaviour). In this context, the implication in charitable activities (such as orphans care and education), needed also due to the hardships caused by barbarian attacks and robberies in Scythia, increased (likely), becoming an important part of the monks' daily activities.

These aspects are confirmed by the information offered by Dionysius Exiguus (†c.530), a great representative of monasticism in Roman Scythia by the turn of the 6th century. Dionysius also reveals that the monasteries of the province were real theological centres at his time, where teaching and understanding the doctrine of faith represented a priority. His words are confirmed by the actions of the Scythian monks in the first quarter of the 6th century. He

is also the one who mentions the name of Peter (c.480–498), another metropolitan of Tomi, who come from among the local monks.

In contrast with the spiritual decline that appeared in the middle of the 5th century, the material situation of the monasteries in the province improved. Archaeological discoveries revealed the expansion of the old monastic centres, as well as the emergence of new ones. Monastic complexes of the 5th and 6th centuries are known mainly in the southern part of the province, on Sukha Reka and Dobrich Valleys, at Dumbrăveni, at Murfatlar, on the valley near Petroșani, at St. Apostle Andrew Cave (Romania), and (on the Black Sea coast) at Kaliakra Cape, Țărlata (Kamen Brîag village), and Tîulenovo (Bulgaria). The monastic complex of Slava Rusă, situated in the northern half of the province, was also extended.

Most of the literary information regarding monastic life in Roman Scythia dates to the first half of the 6th century. Trying to contribute to solving the doctrinal disputes in the empire, generated by Nestorianism and Monophysitism, the monks in the province promoted a new theological formula, (rightly) evaluated in recent studies as theanthropopaschite (“One of the Holy Trinity suffered/was crucified in the flesh”). This is the most important theological contribution of Scythian monks. Their formula was officially approved by the Catholic Church within the Second Council of Constantinople (553). In the extant literary sources, there are also mentioned by names some of the Scythian monks directly involved in debates: John Maxentius (abbas), John (presbyter and archimandrite), Peter (deacon), John (deacon), Venerius (deacon), John (lector), John (monk), Leontius (monk), Achilles (monk), and Maurice (monk). They went to Constantinople and some of them to Rome and to Sardinia, to get in contact with the African bishops exiled in the island. John Maxentius is also the author of seven writings. Others (that remained anonymous) made up two patristical texts collections (*Exempla sanctorum patrum* and *Collectio Palatina*). Another Scythian monk, named John (i.e., likely presbyter and archimandrite John), wrote at least a short theological treatise against Nestorians and Monophysites (*Disputation on the Nestorians and Eutychians*) and became metropolitan of Tomi (c.530–c.550). It is not excluded for other monks of the province to have been elected as hierarchs for some of the ordinary bishoprics organized in the cities of Roman Scythia since 536.

The ranks held by the Scythian monks (simple monk, lector, deacon, presbyter, and archimandrite) confirm the good internal organization of the Istro-Pontic monasteries at that time. Also, the content of their writings proves their assiduous study of theological literature, the existence of libraries (at least) in some of their monasteries, and that they were well informed on contemporary theological teachings.

Monastic life in Scythia went into decline due to the inroads of the Avars and Slavs in the late 6th and early 7th century. The last monasteries in Scythia may have functioned in the fortified cities of the province, such as Tomi, Akres (Kaliakra Cape) and, possibly, Histria, (L)Ibida and Callatis. After the settling of the Proto-Bulgarians to the south of the Danube River (year 681), it disappeared.

Figures



FIGURE 1 The remains of the chapel 'E3' in the rock-cut monastic complex near Murfatlar (Romania)



FIGURE 2 The cave monastic complex near Petroșani (Romania)

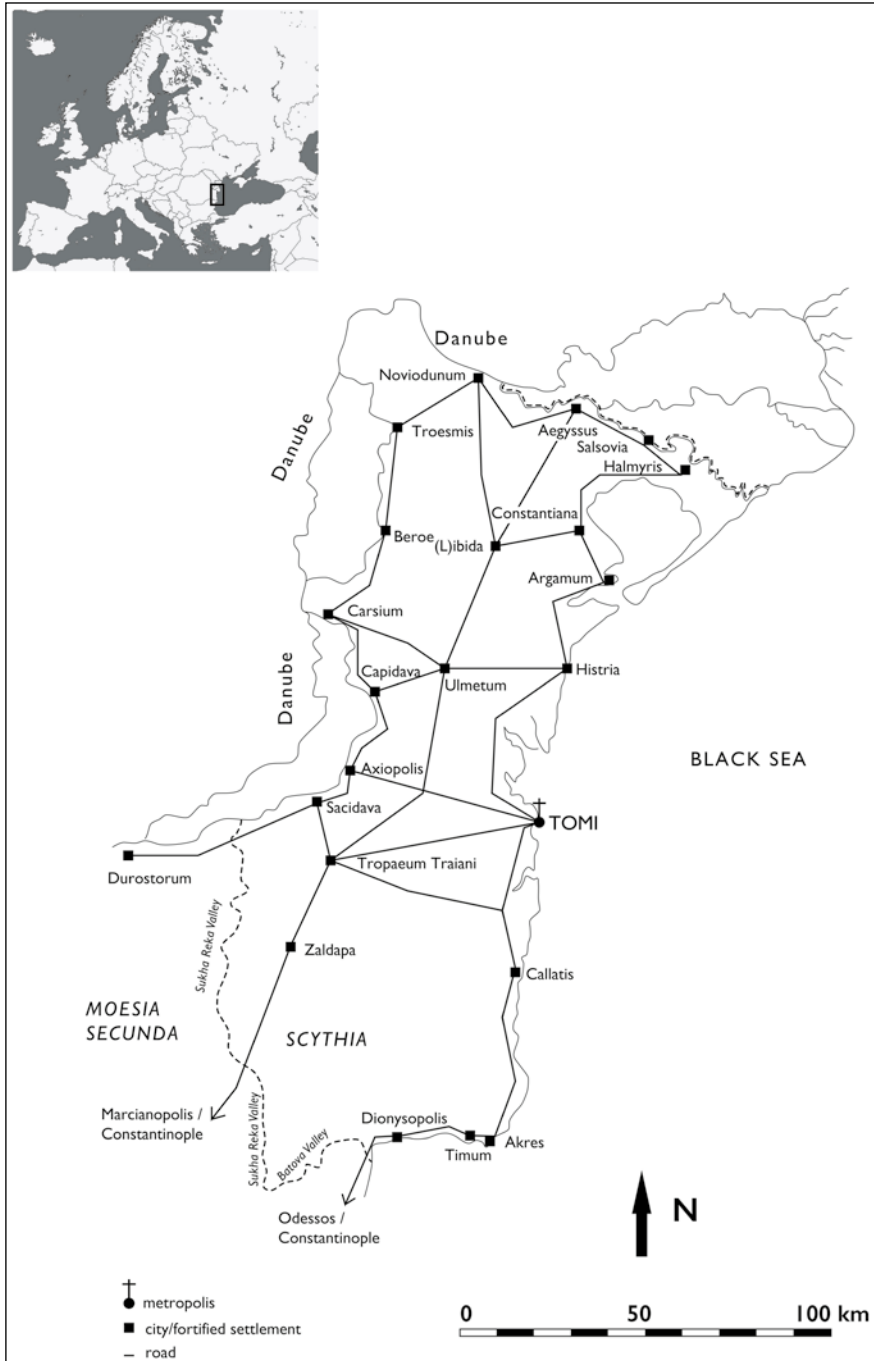


FIGURE 3 Map of Roman Scythia: borders, main settlements, arterial roads, and few secondary roads (after Barnea, *La Dobroudja Romaine*, p. 291, fig. 21; Zahariade, *Scythia Minor*, p. 50, fig. 14)



FIGURE 4 Map of the episcopal sees in the Roman province of Scythia around 536



FIGURE 5 Map of the episcopal sees in the Roman province of Scythia under Justin II (565-574)

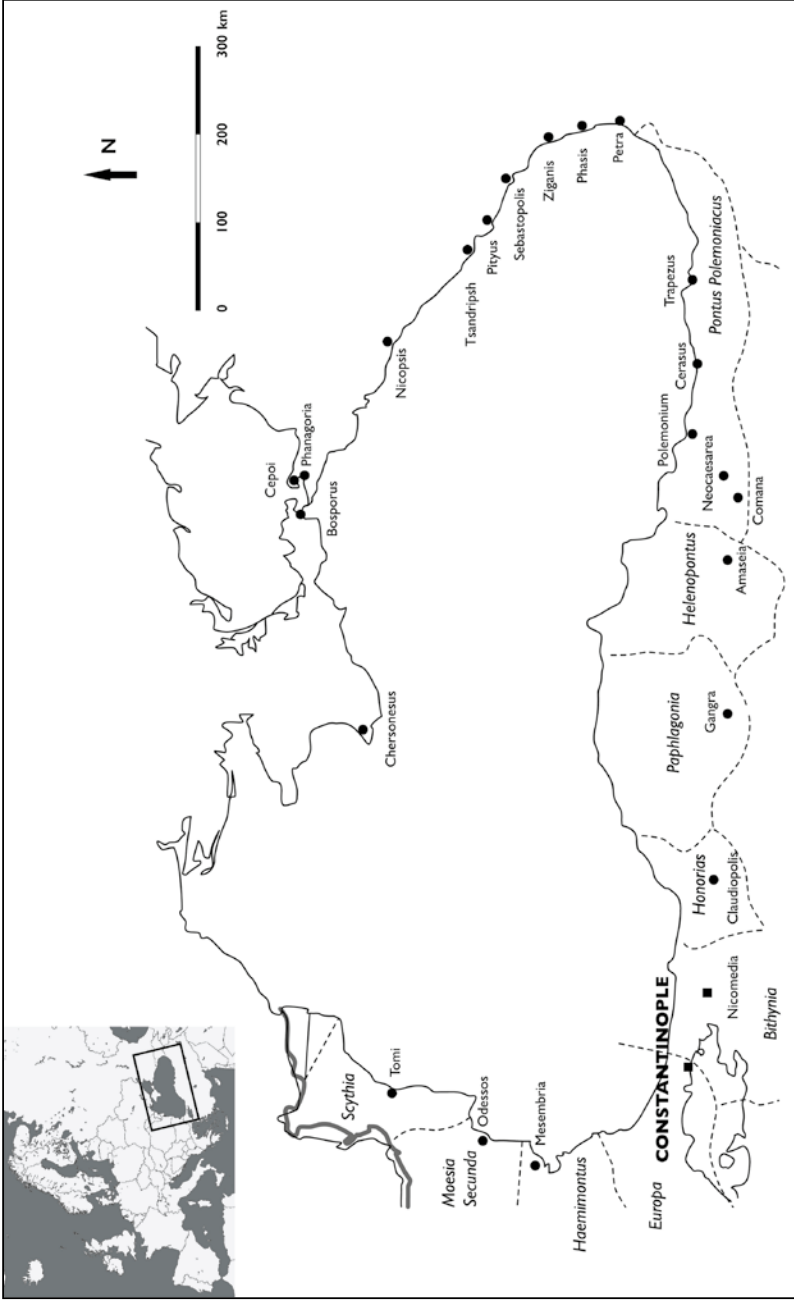


FIGURE 6 Map of the Roman provinces and of the main settlements on the Black Sea coastlines (5th century AD)

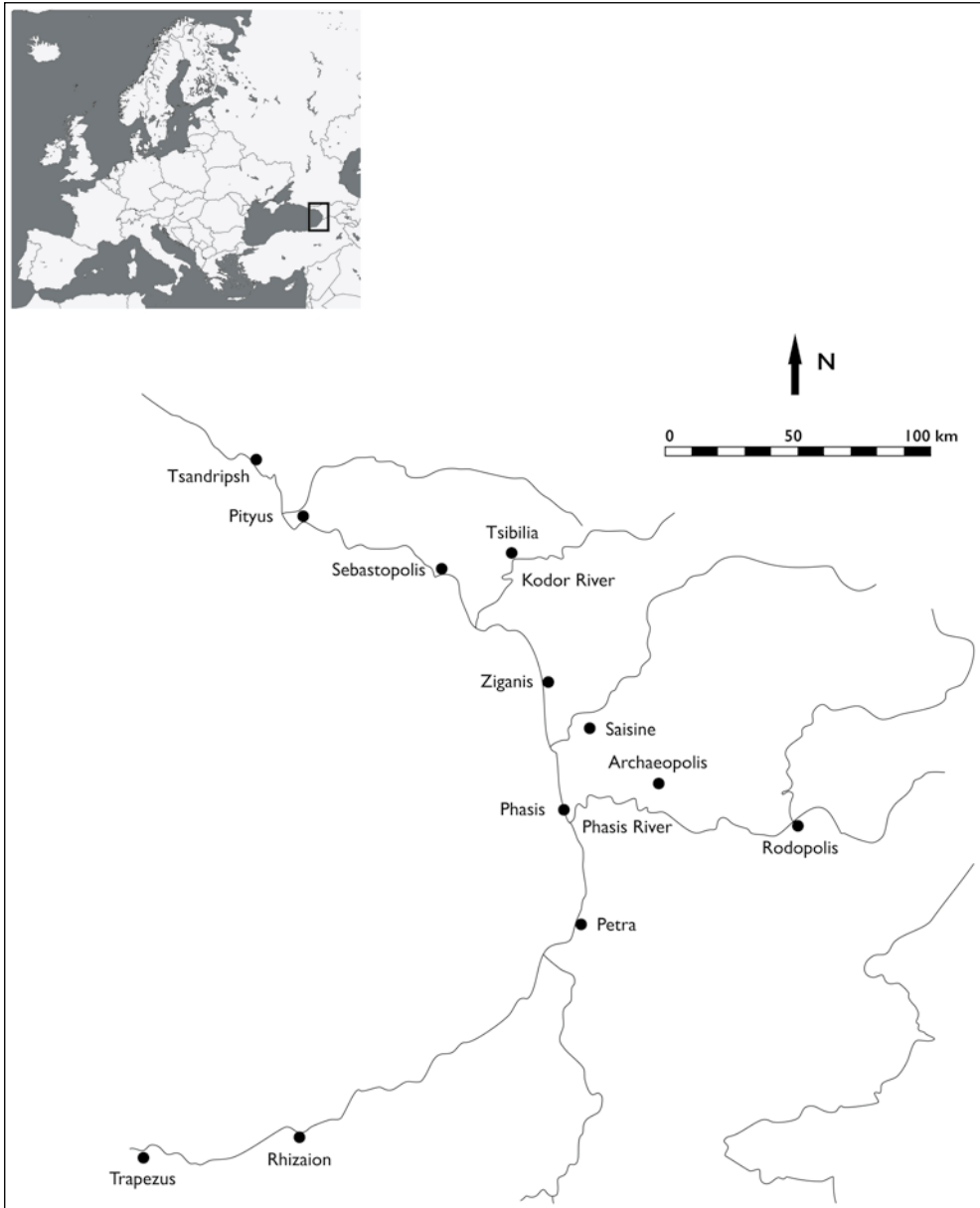


FIGURE 7 Map of the main settlements on the western Black Sea coastline (5th century AD)

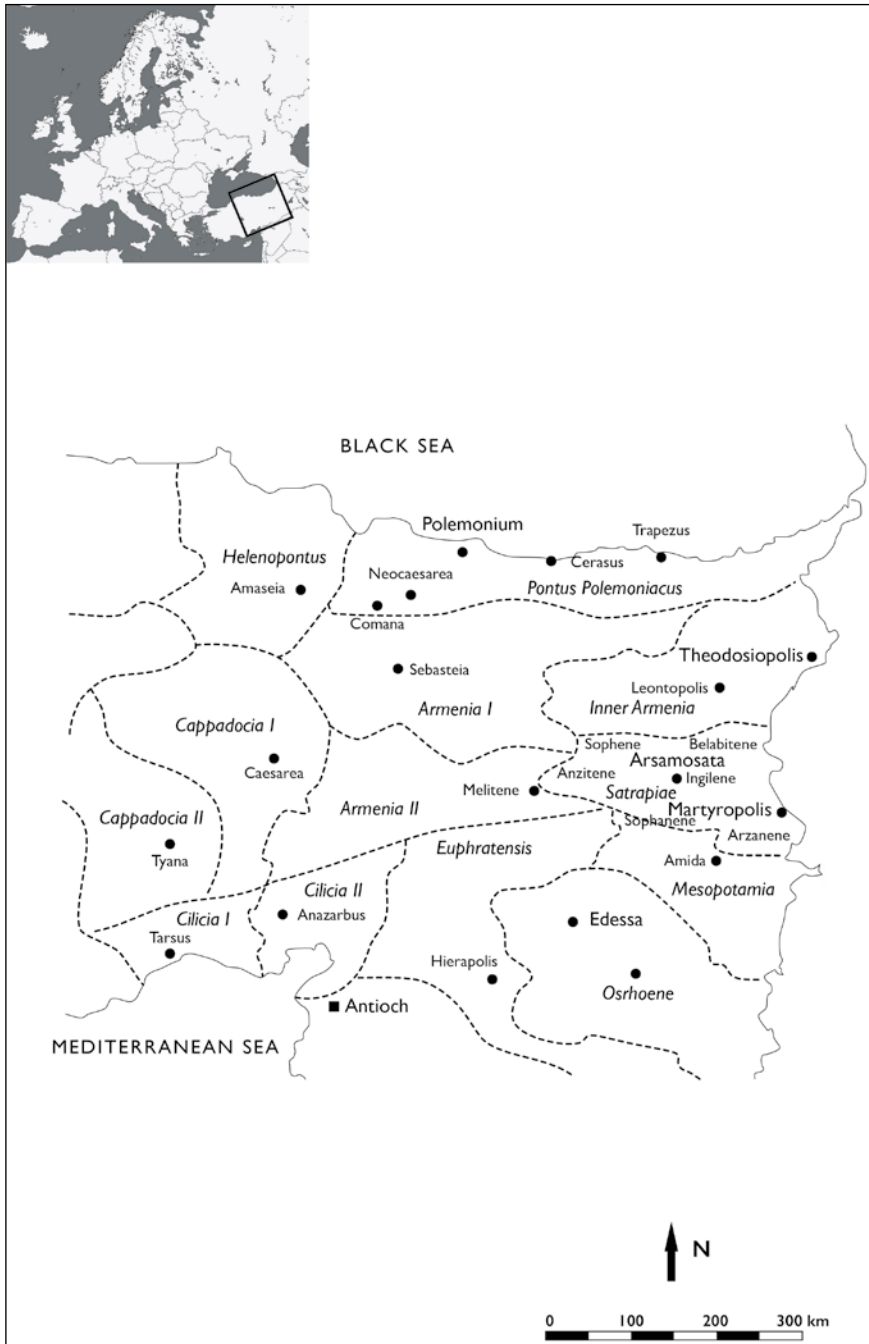


FIGURE 8 Map of the northeastern part of the Roman Empire (5th century AD)

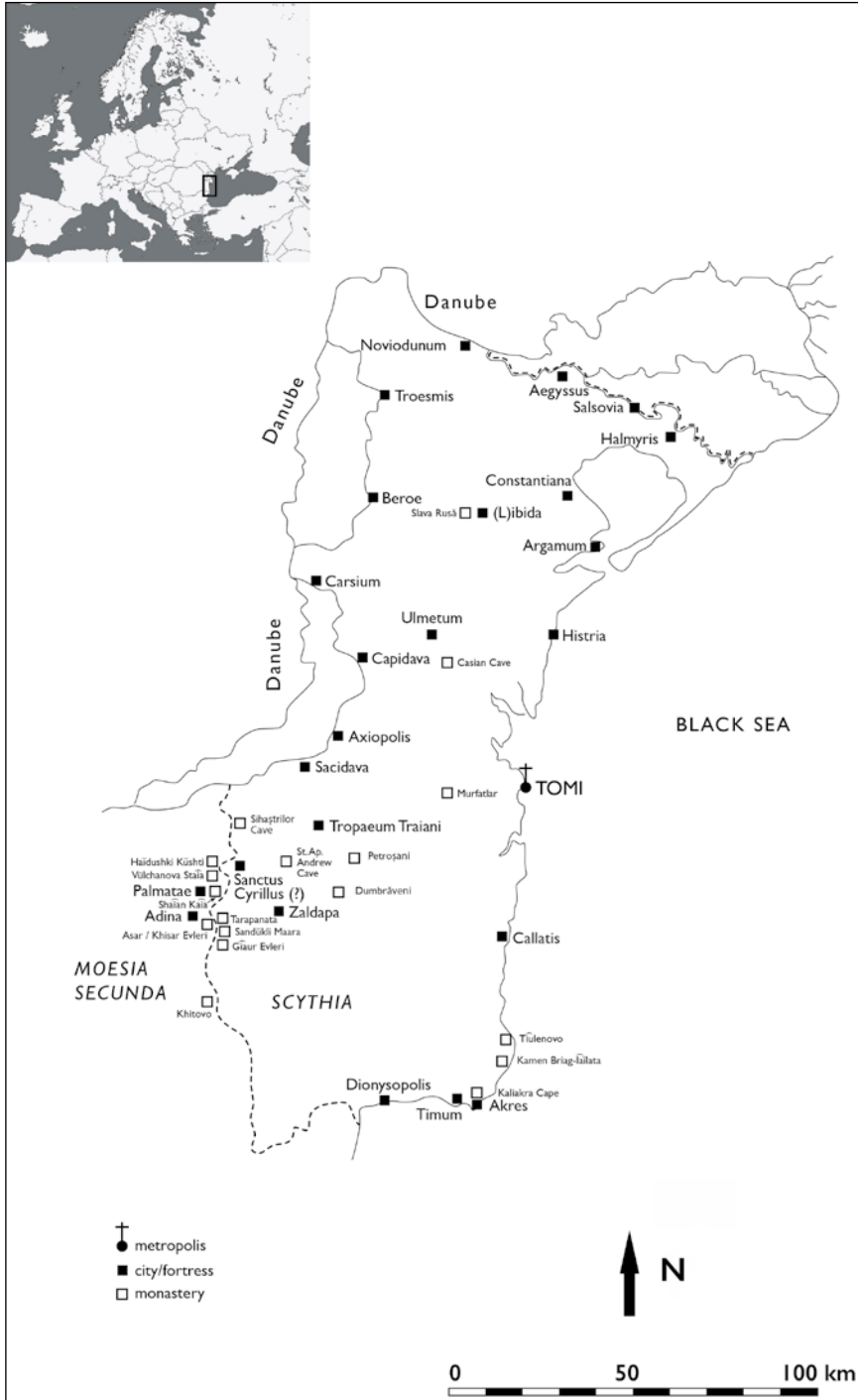


FIGURE 9 Map of the monasteries in the Roman province of Scythia (4th–7th centuries)

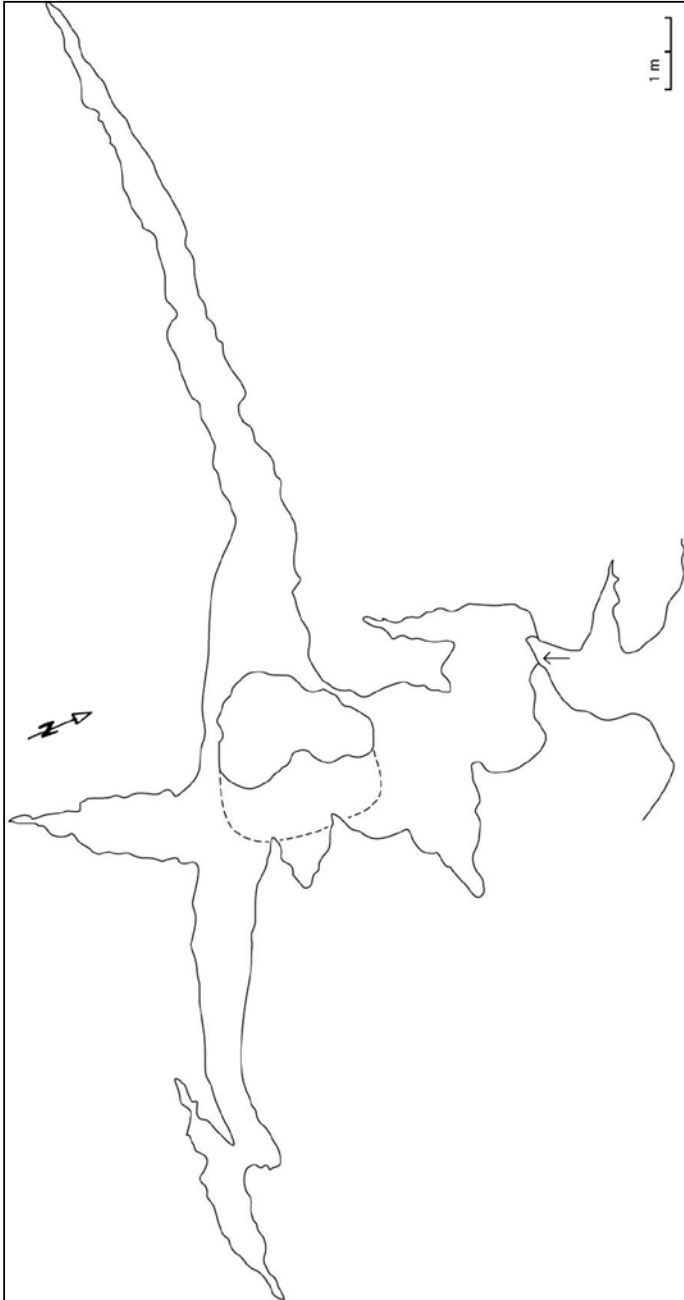


FIGURE 10 Plan of the Casian Cave (after Voinea and Szmoniewski, "Din nou despre peștera Casian," p. 236, pl. IV/1)

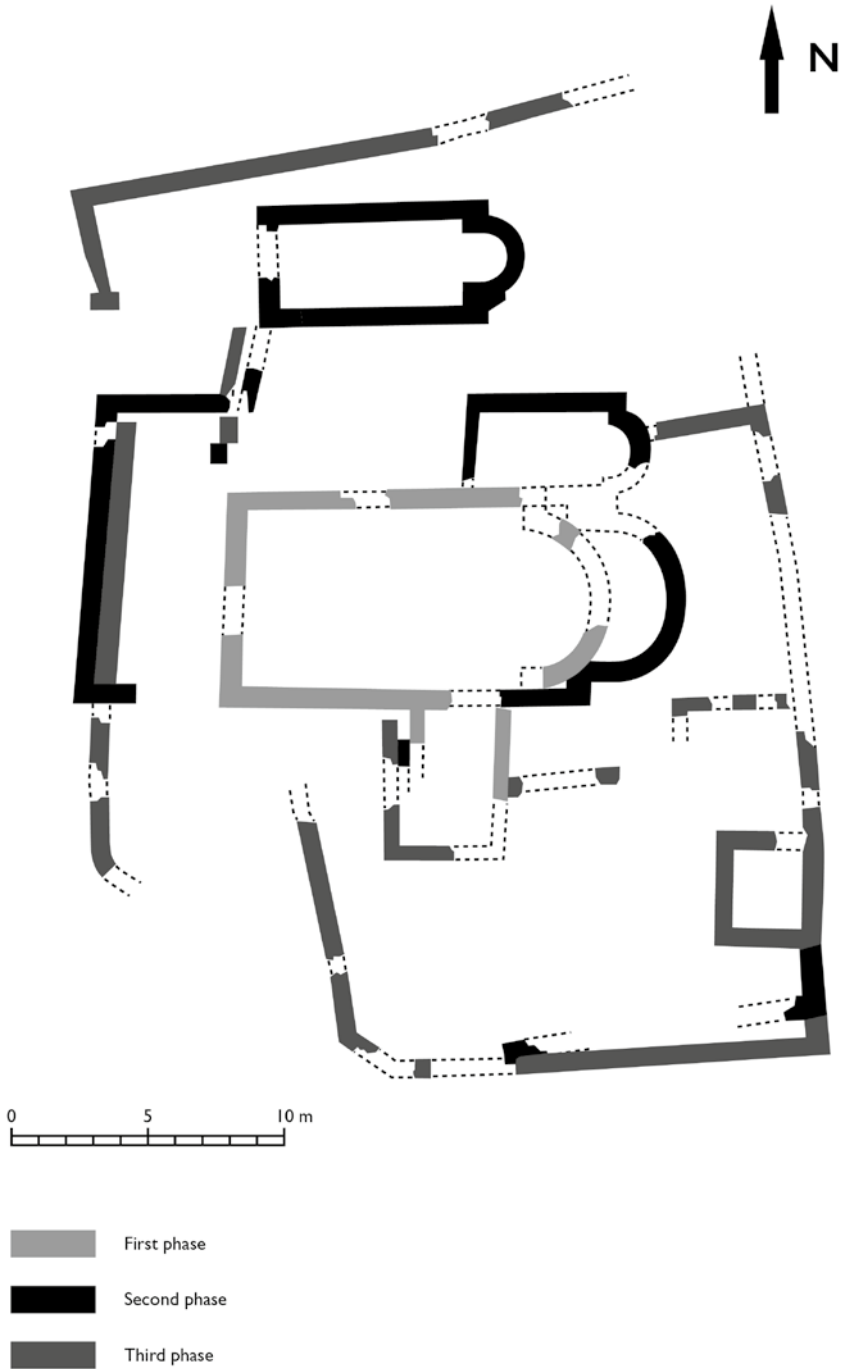


FIGURE 11 Plan of the monastery near Slava Rusă (Romania) (after Opaït, Opaït, and Bănică, "Der frühchristliche Komplex," fig. 2)

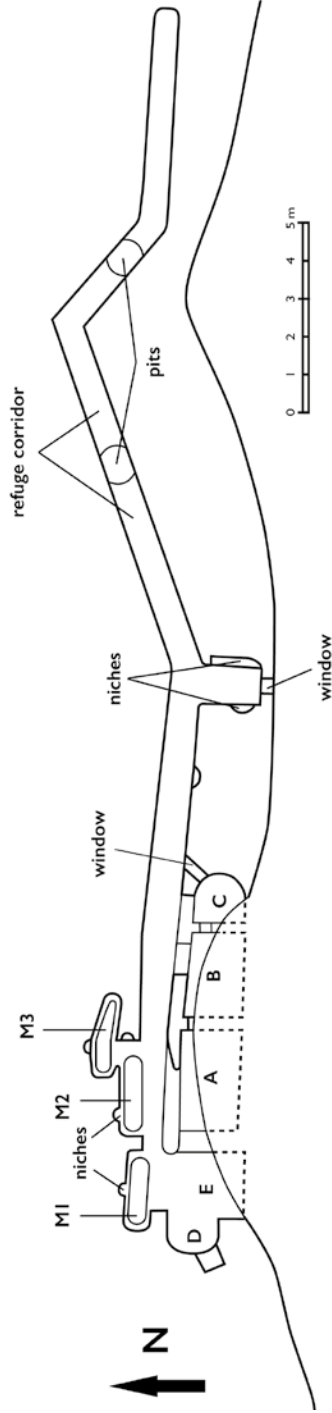


FIGURE 12 Plan of the second level of the rock-cut monastery near Dumbrăveni (after Chiriac, "Un monument inedit," p. 251, fig. 2)

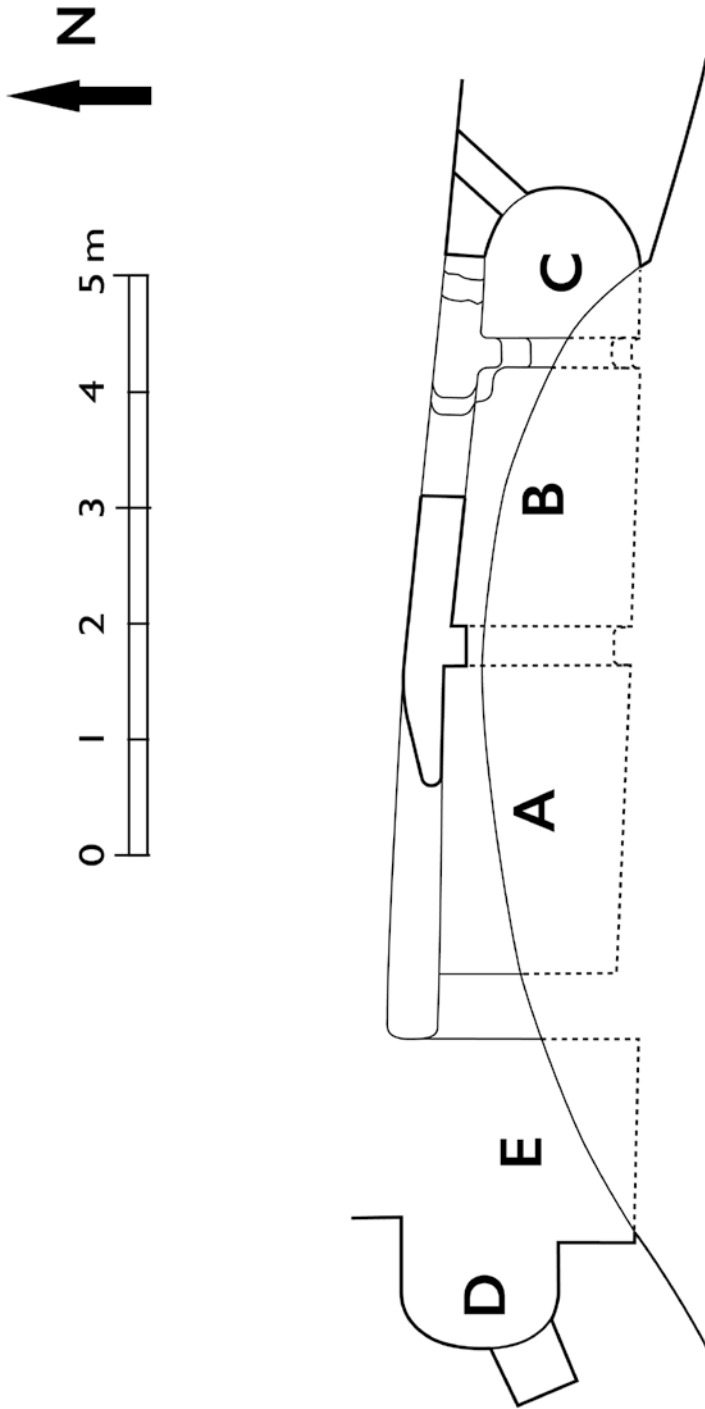


FIGURE 13 Plan of the chapel 'Br' in the rock-cut monastery near Dumbrăveni (after Chiriac, "Un monument inedit," p. 252, fig. 3)

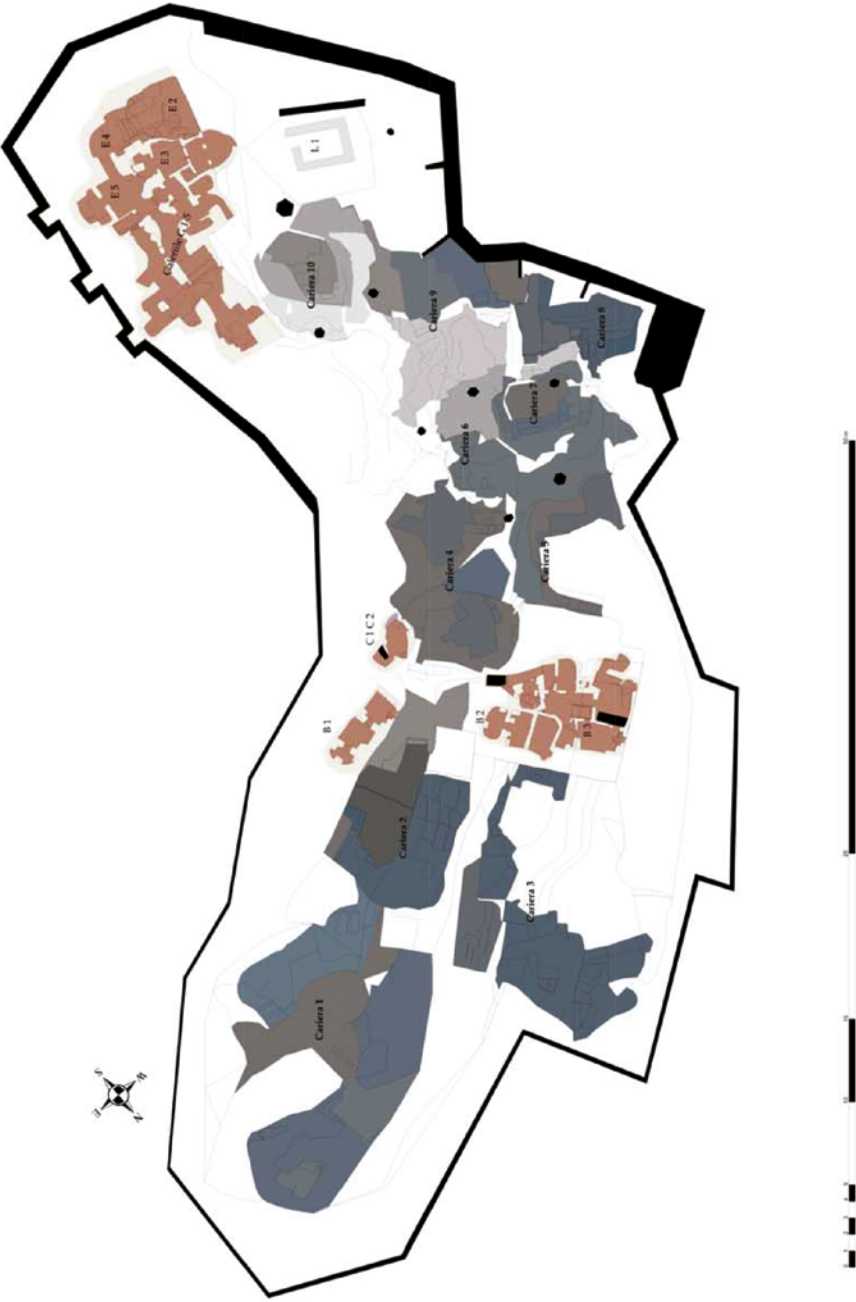


FIGURE 14 The general plan of the monastic complex in Murfatlar (after Damian, Samson, and Vasile, "Complexul," p. 137, fig. 4)

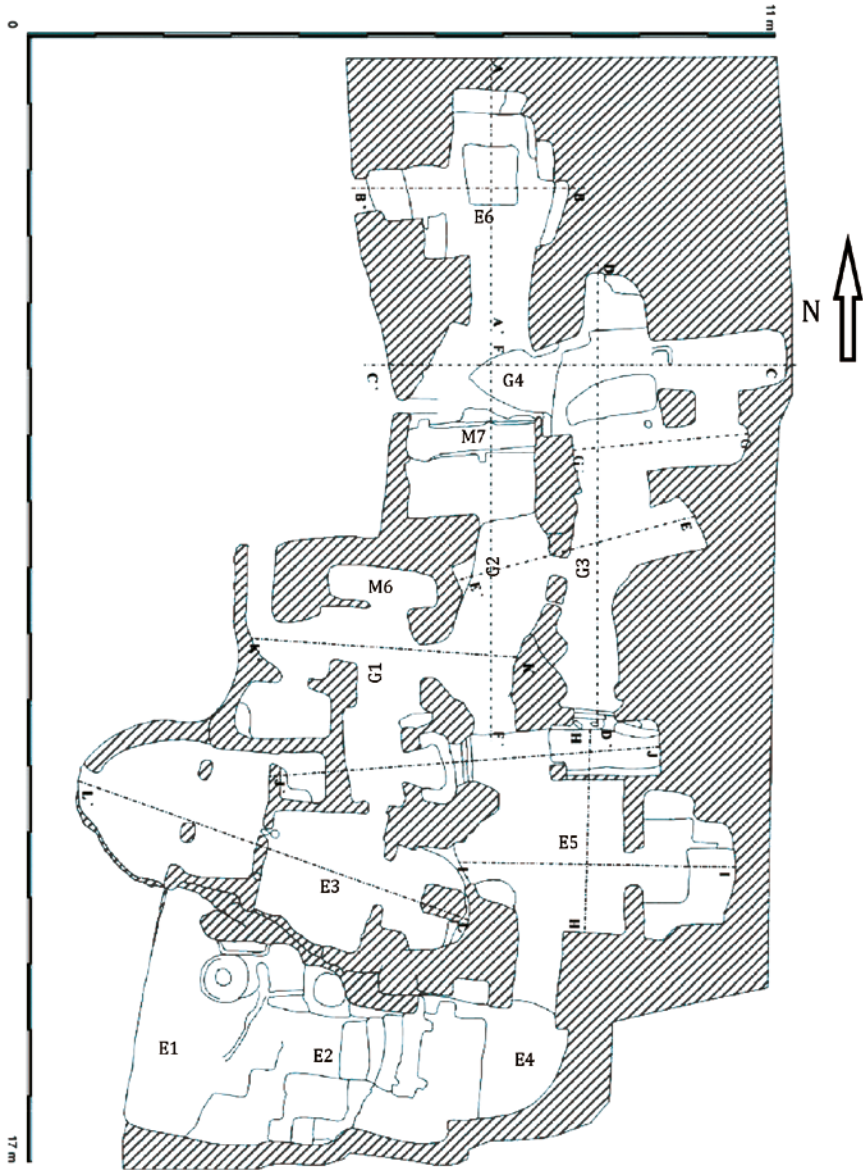


FIGURE 15 Plan of the sector 'E' in the rock-cut monastery near Murfıtlar (after Damian, Samson, and Vasile, "Complexul," p. 141, fig. 8)

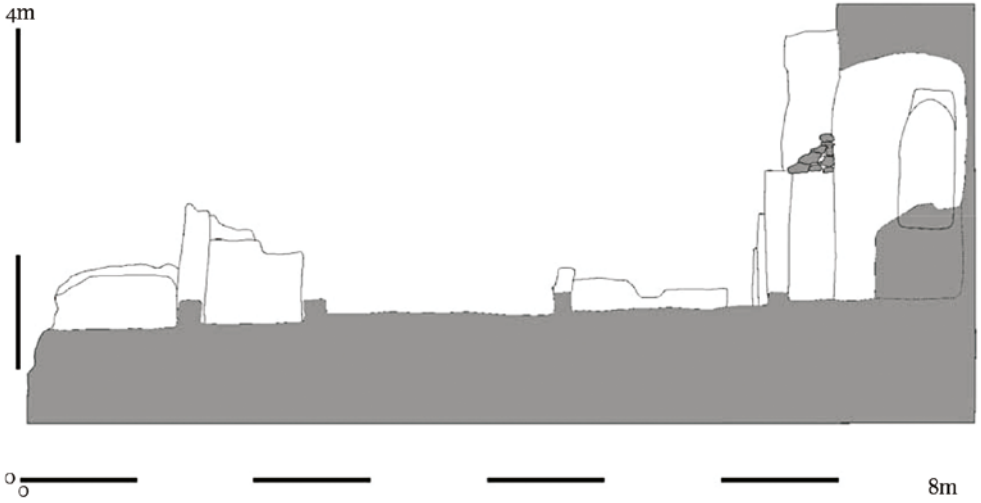


FIGURE 16 The chapel 'E3' in Murfatlar (L-L' section) (after Damian, Samson, and Vasile, "Complexul," p. 147, fig. 14b)

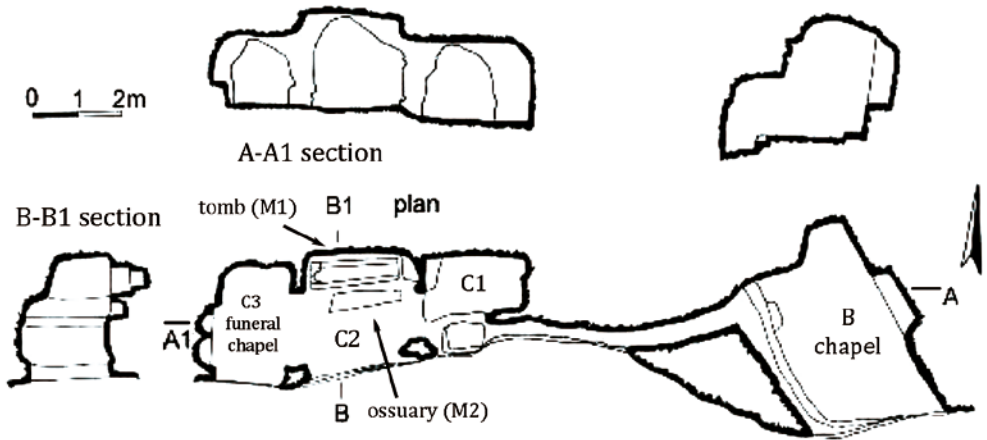


FIGURE 17 Plan of the cave monastery near Khitovo (after Atanasov, "Les monastères rupestres," p. 199, fig. 11)

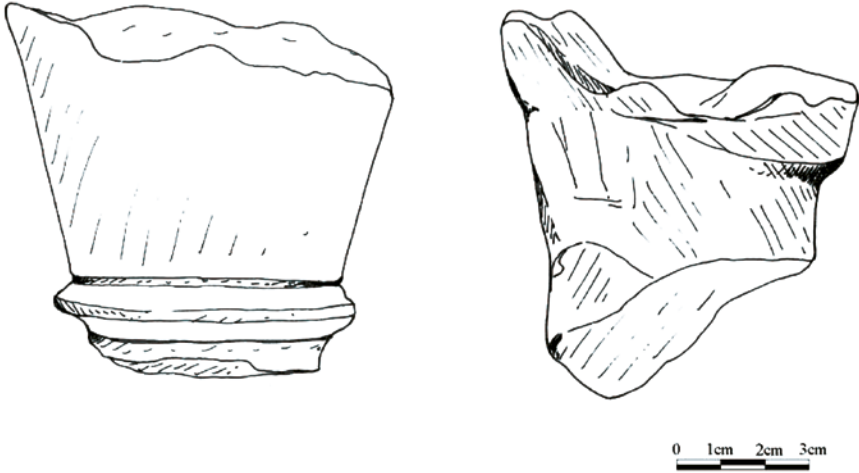


FIGURE 18 Eucharistic chalices from Murfatlar (after Damian, Samson, and Vasile, "Complexul," p. 152, fig. 19d–e)

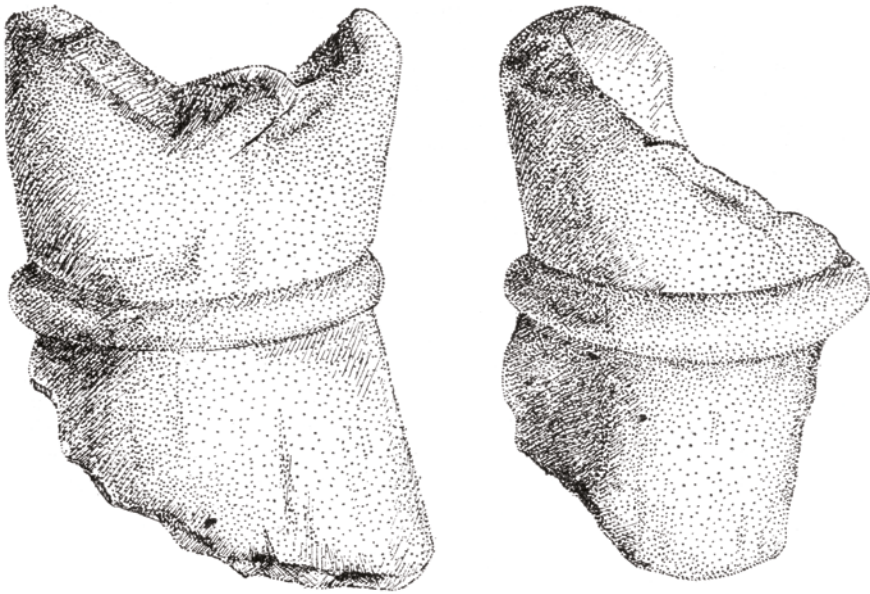


FIGURE 19 Eucharistic chalices from Sucidava (now Izvoarele, Romania) (6th century AD) (after Diaconu, "Documente vechi," p. 165, fig. 5)

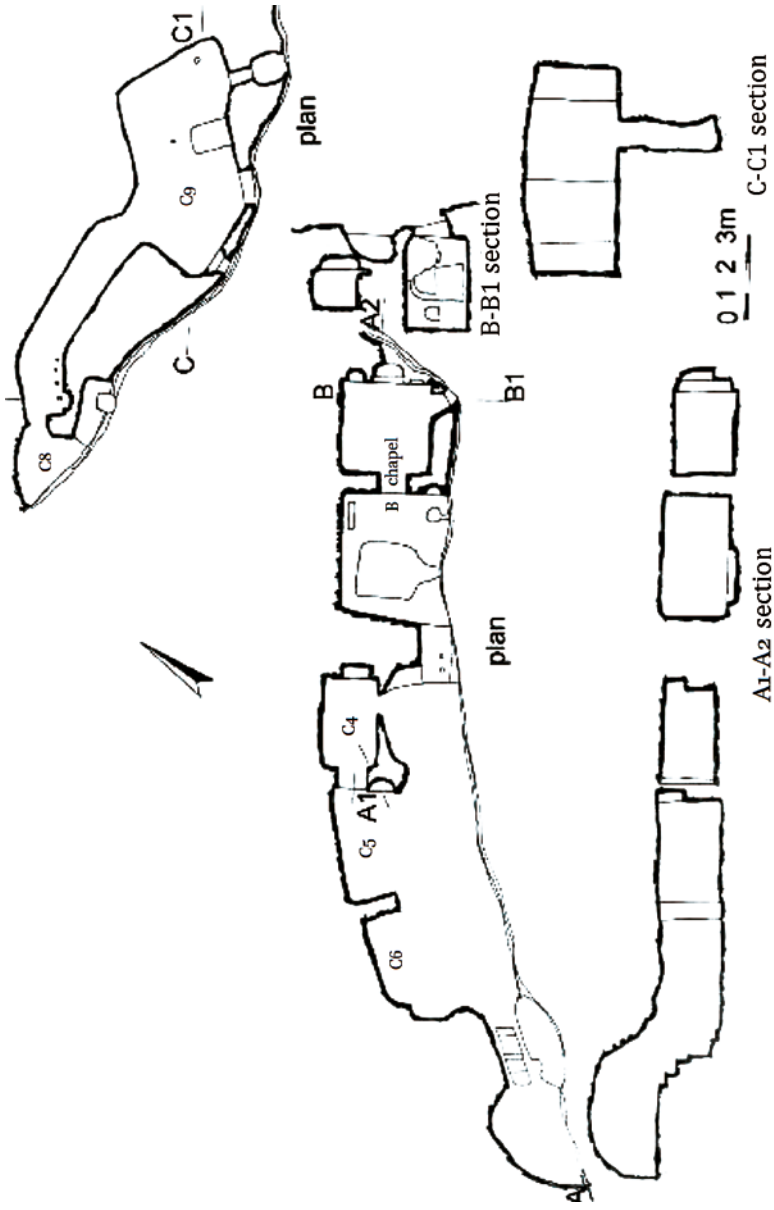


FIGURE 20 Plan of the Găaur Evleri cave monastery (after Atanasov, "Les monastères rupestres," p. 197, fig. 7)

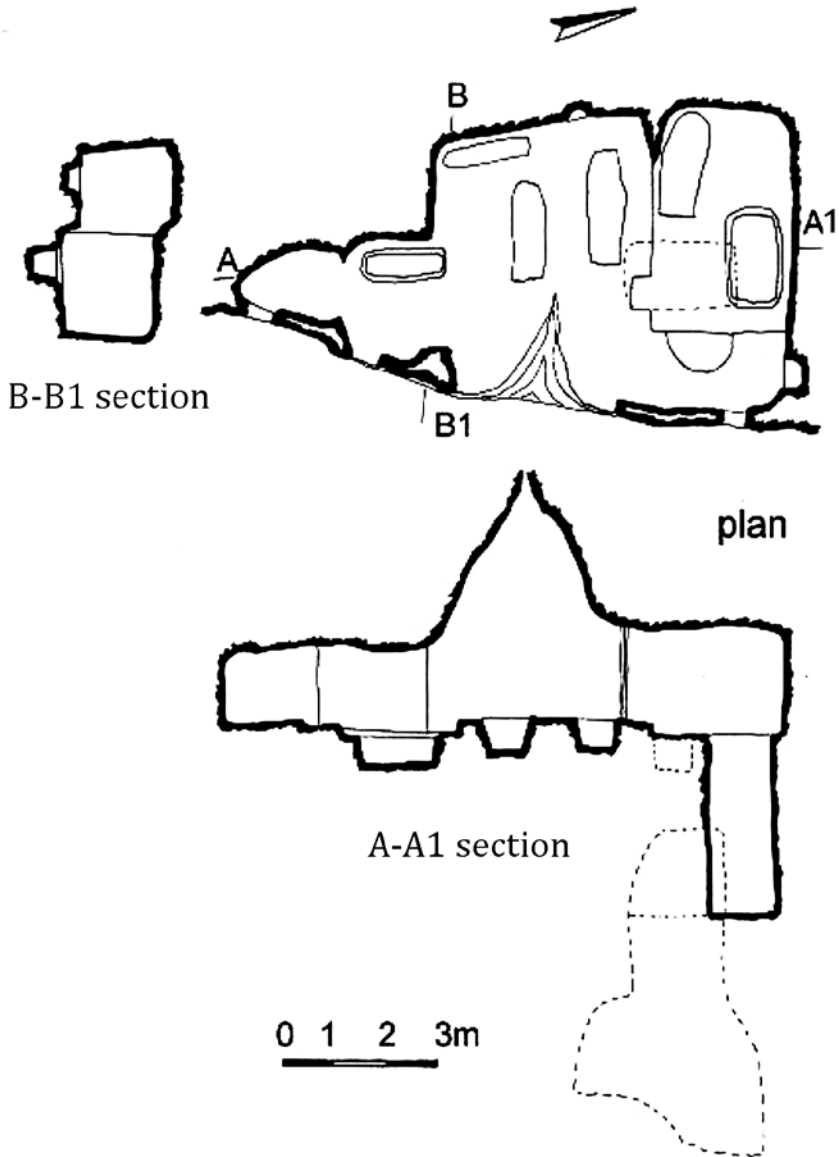


FIGURE 21 Plan of the Sandükli Maara funeral cave complex (after Atanasov, "Les monastères rupestres," p. 197, fig. 8)

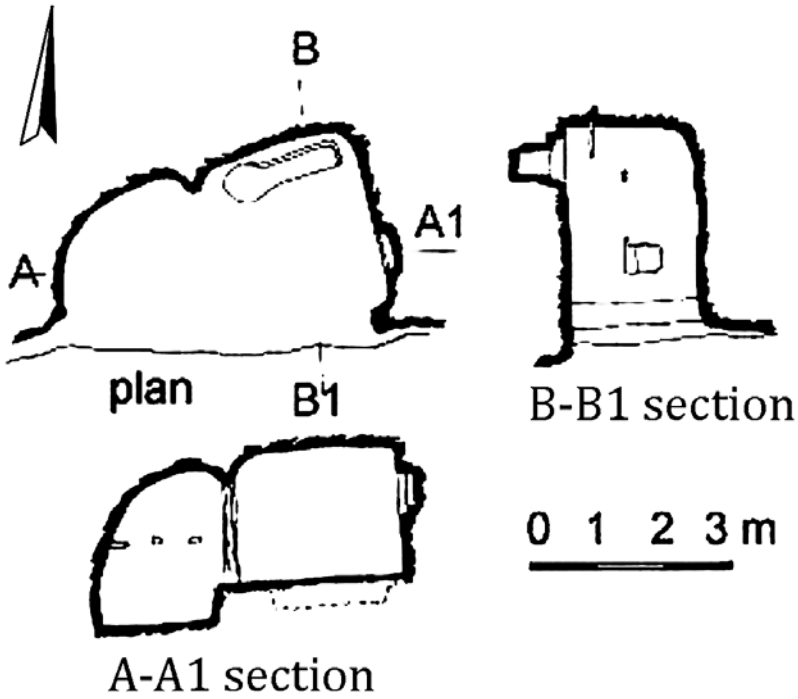


FIGURE 22 Plan of the chapel 'P1' in the Tarapanata cave complex (after Atanasov, "Les monastères rupestres," p. 198, fig. 9)

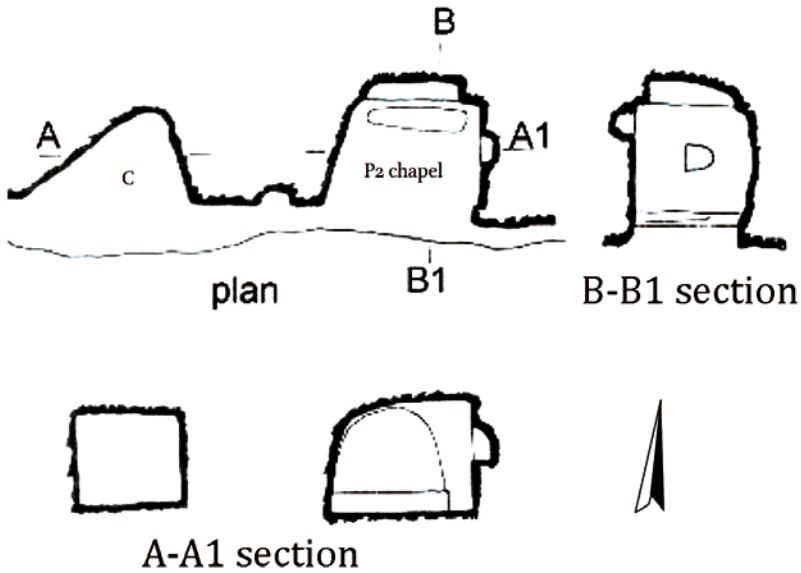


FIGURE 23 Plan of the chapel 'P2' and of the cell 'C' in the Tarapanata cave complex (after Atanasov, "Les monastères rupestres," p. 198, fig. 9)

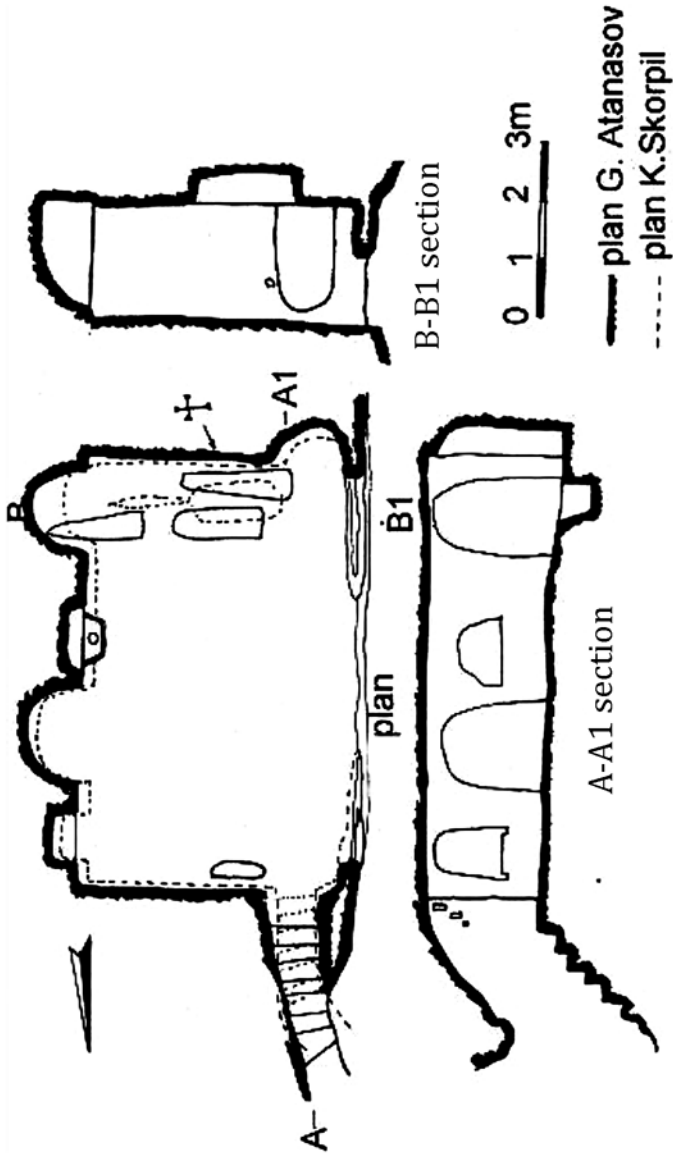


FIGURE 24 Plan of the chapels 'B2' and 'P' in the Asar/Khisar Evleri cave monastery (after Atanasov, "Les monastères rupestres," p. 196, fig. 6)

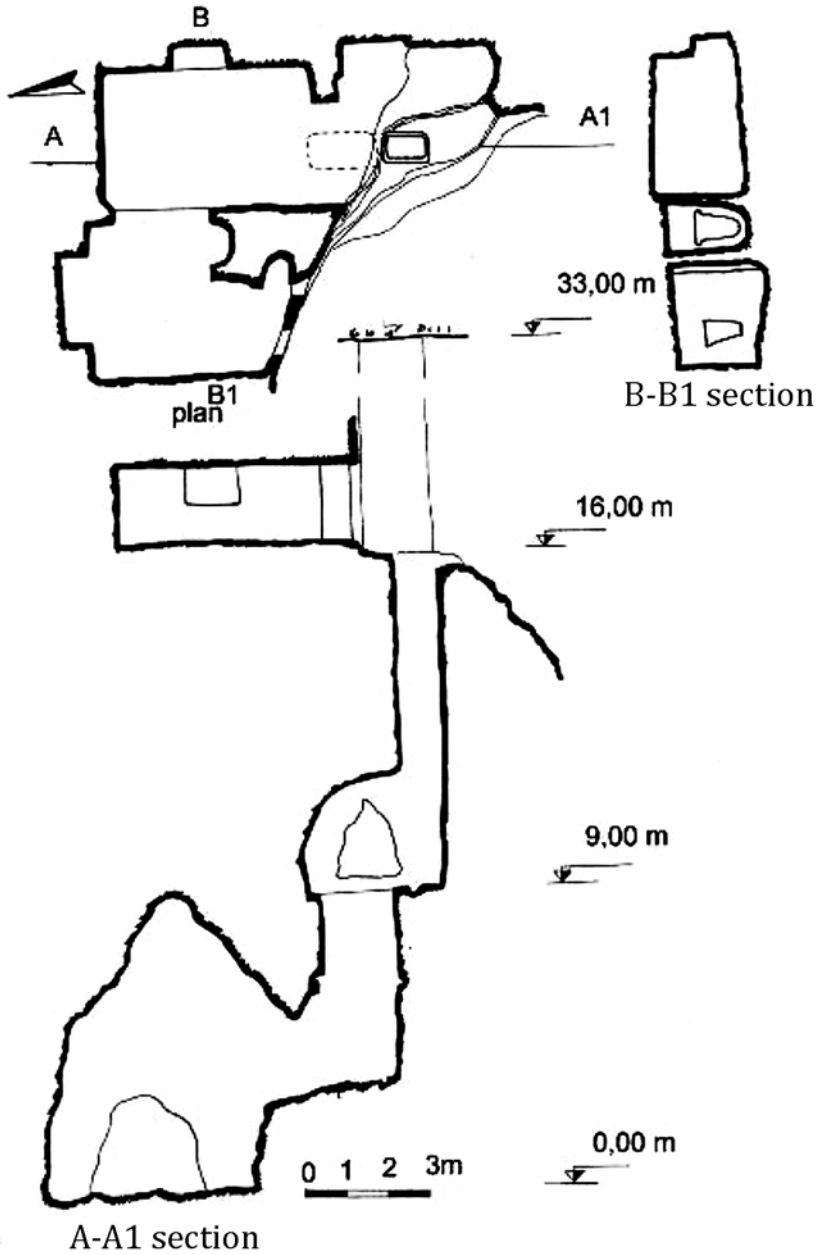


FIGURE 25 Plan of the church 'B' in the Asar/Khisar Evleri cave monastery (after Atanasov, "Les monastères rupestres," p. 195, fig. 4)

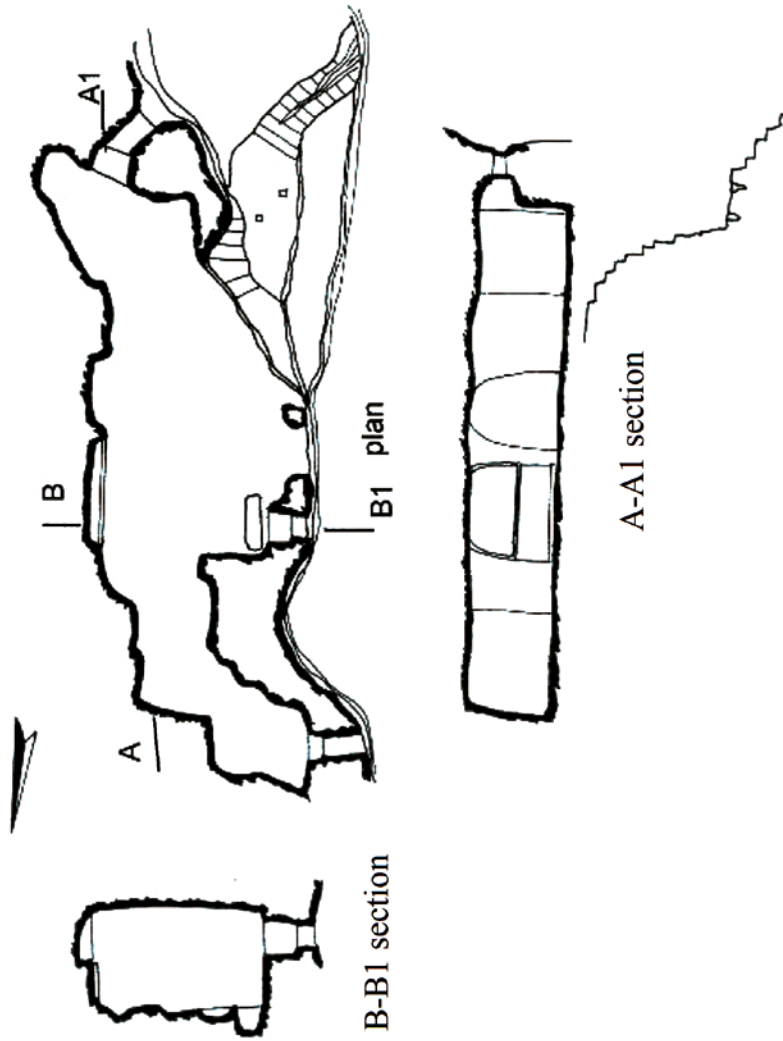


FIGURE 26 Plan of the cell 'C7' in the Asar/Khisar Evleri cave monastery (after Atanasov, "Les monastères rupestres," p. 196, fig. 5)

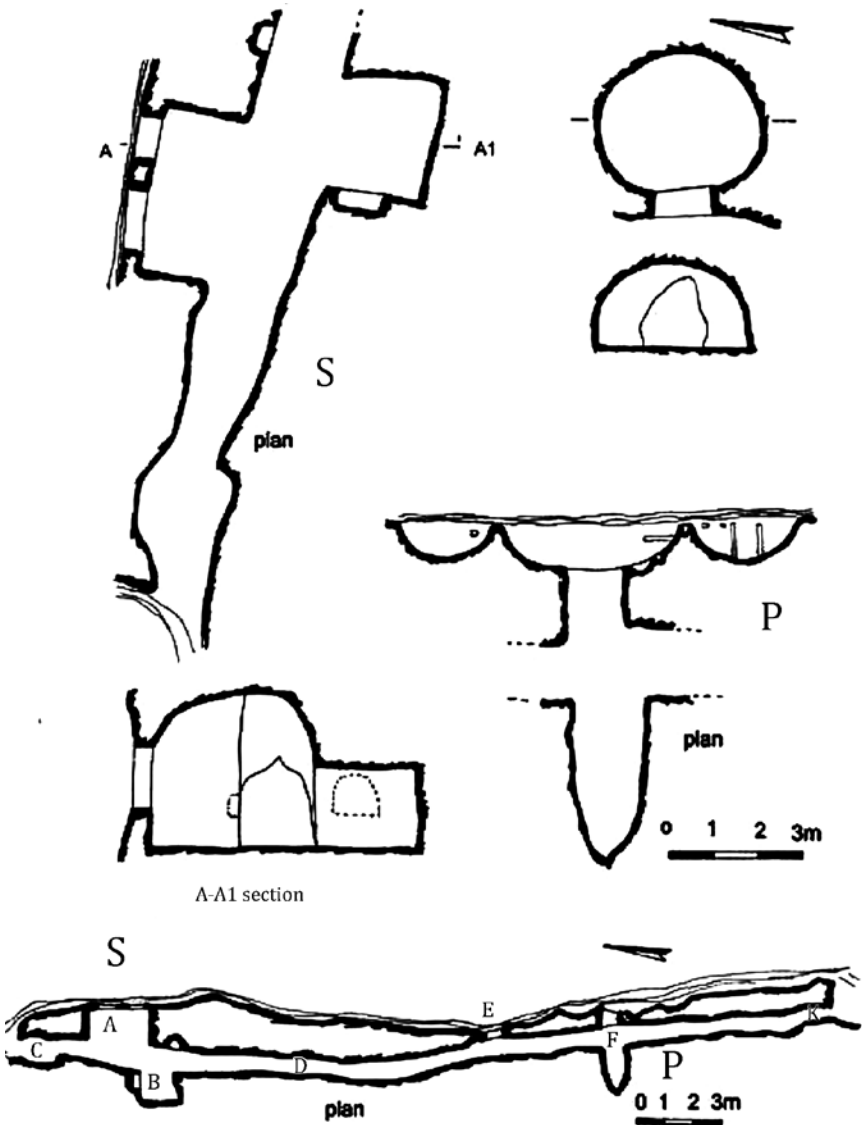


FIGURE 27 Plan of the Shaïan Kaïa cave complex (after Atanasov, "Les monastères rupestres," p. 198, fig. 10)

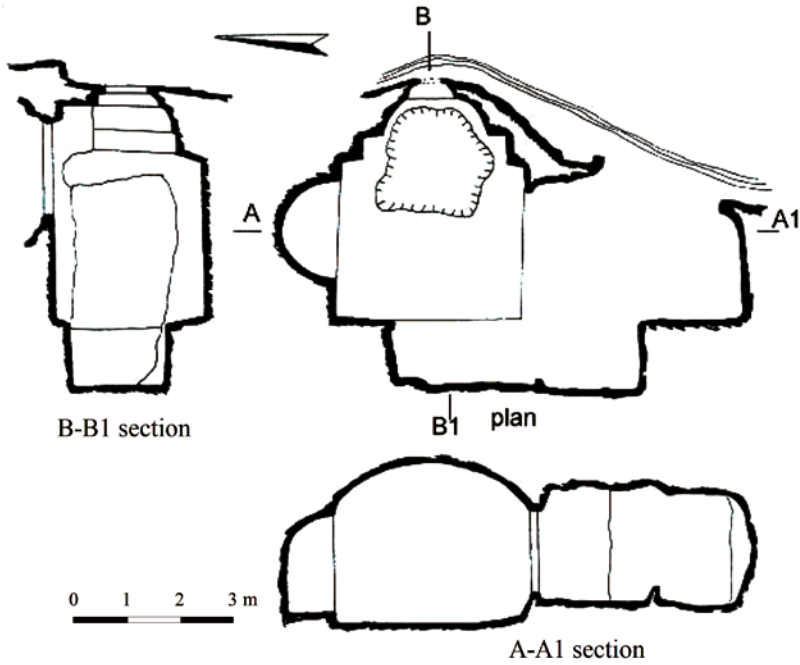


FIGURE 28 Plan of the Vülchanova Staia cave church (after Atanasov, "Les monastères rupestres," p. 195, fig. 3)

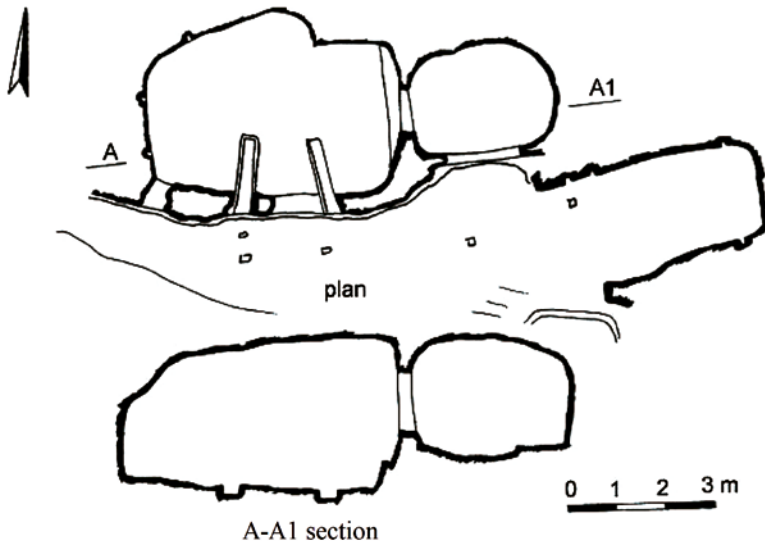


FIGURE 29 Plan of the church in the Haïdushki KÛshti cave hermitage (after Atanasov, "Les monastères rupestres," p. 194, fig. 2)

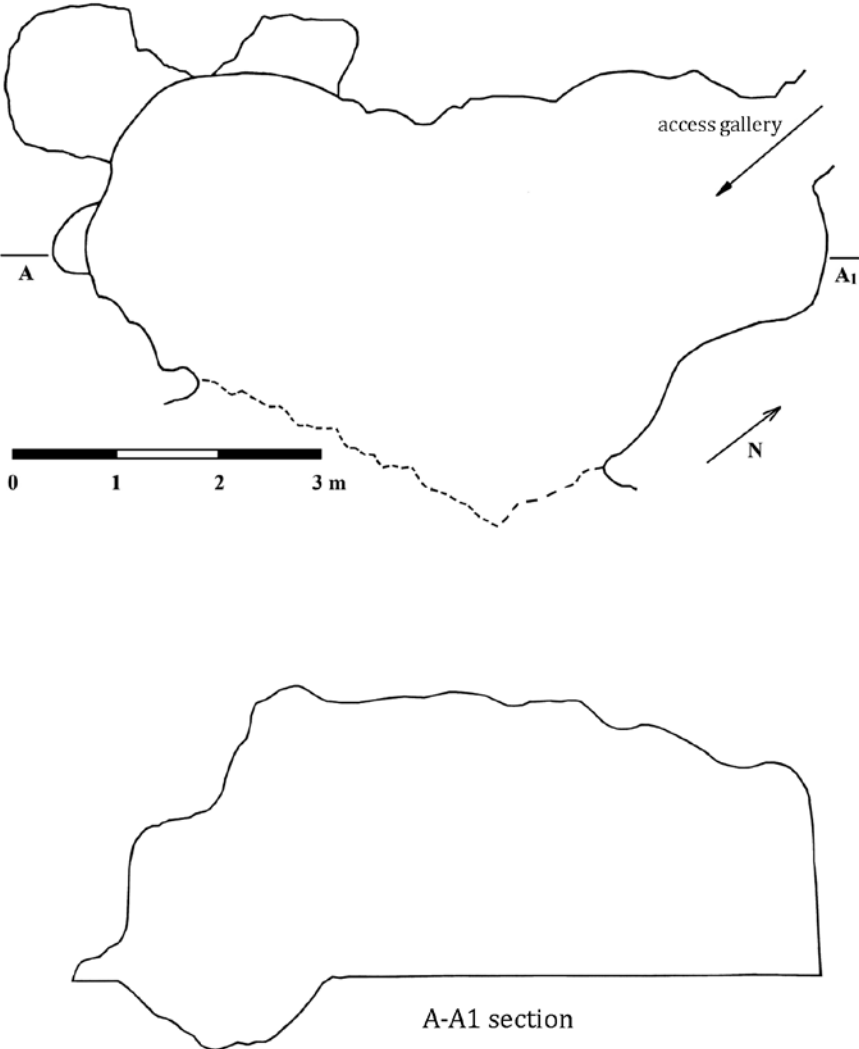


FIGURE 30 Plan of the Sihaștrilor Cave

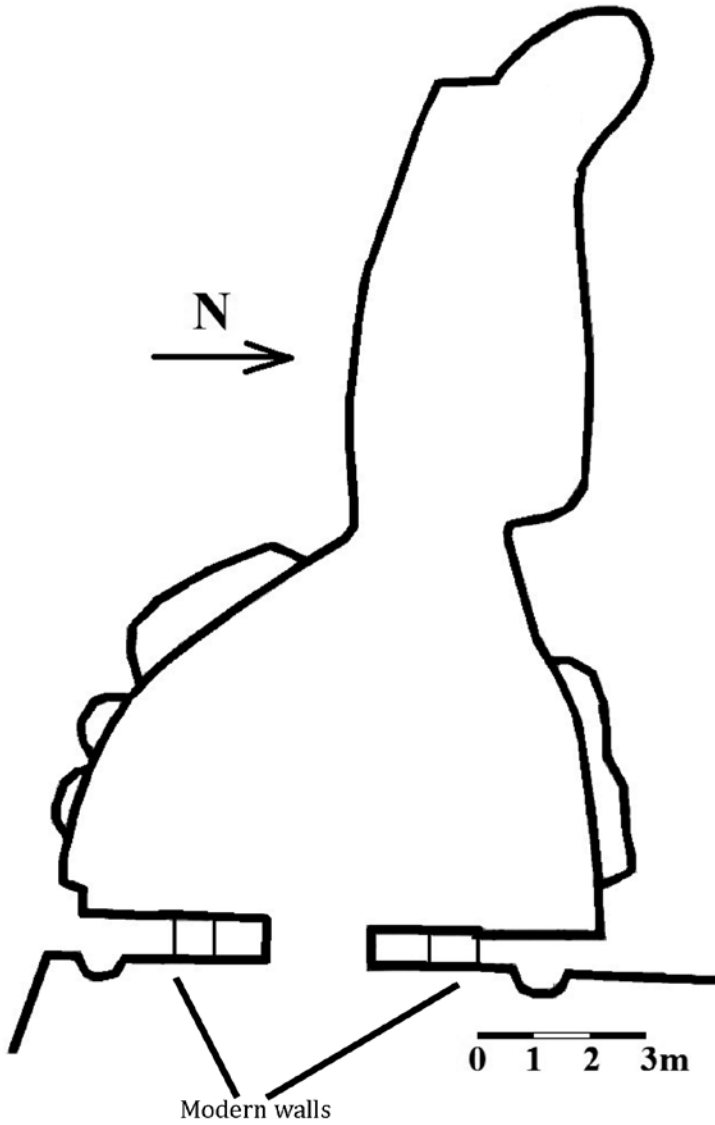


FIGURE 31 Plan of the Saint Apostle Andrew Cave (after L. Tudosie)

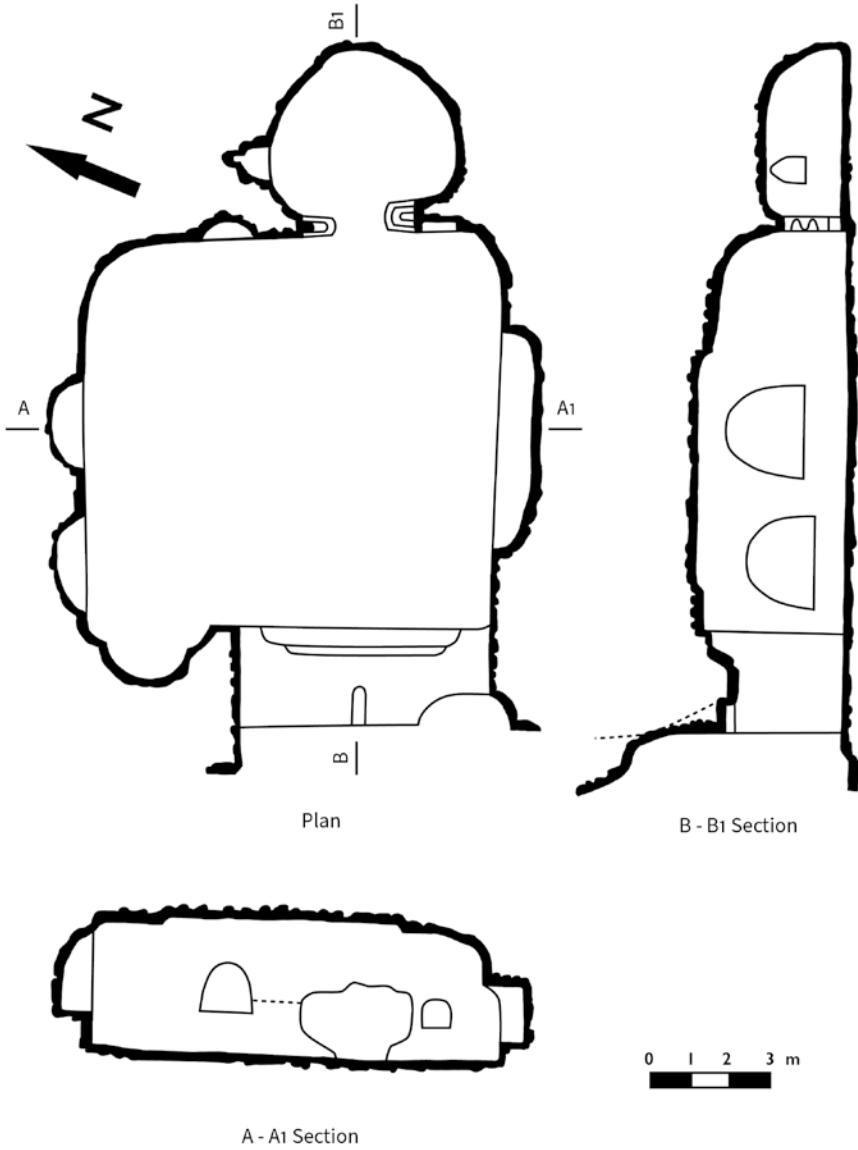


FIGURE 32 Plan of the cave church in Kaliakra (after Atanasov, "Rannovizantiiski skalni šćurkvi," p. 35, fig. 6)

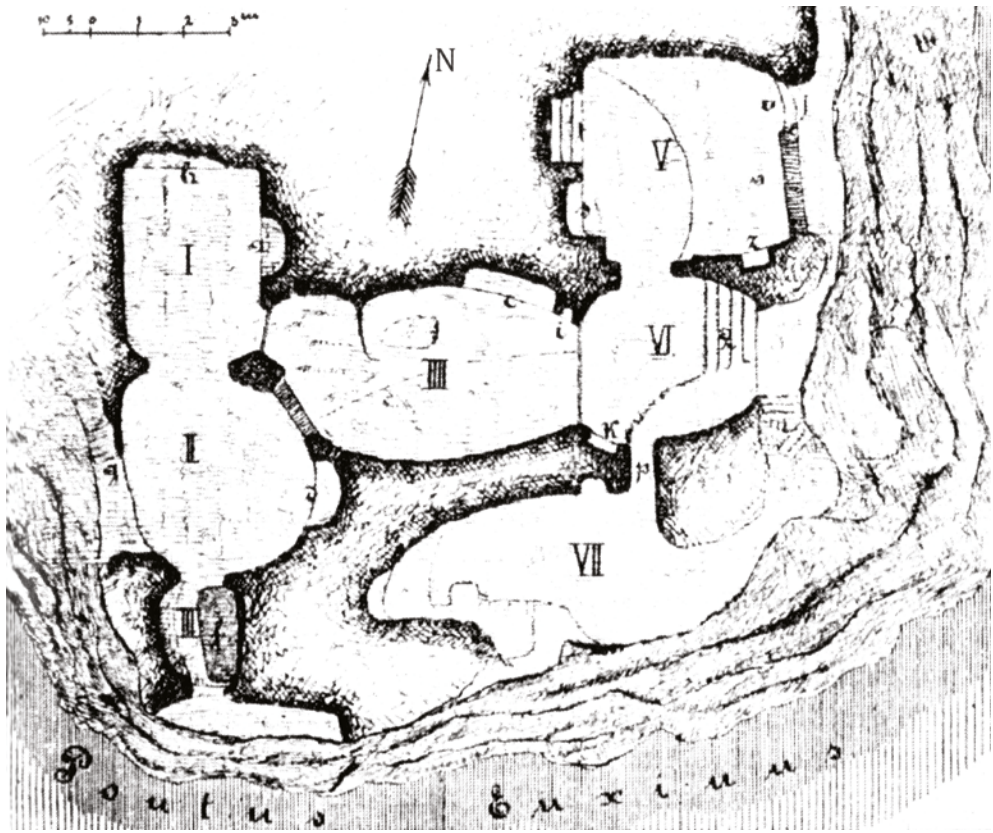


FIGURE 33 Plan of the cave complex in Kaliakra (after Shkorpil and Shkorpil, "Severoiztochna Bŭlgariâ (I)," p. 7, fig. 20)

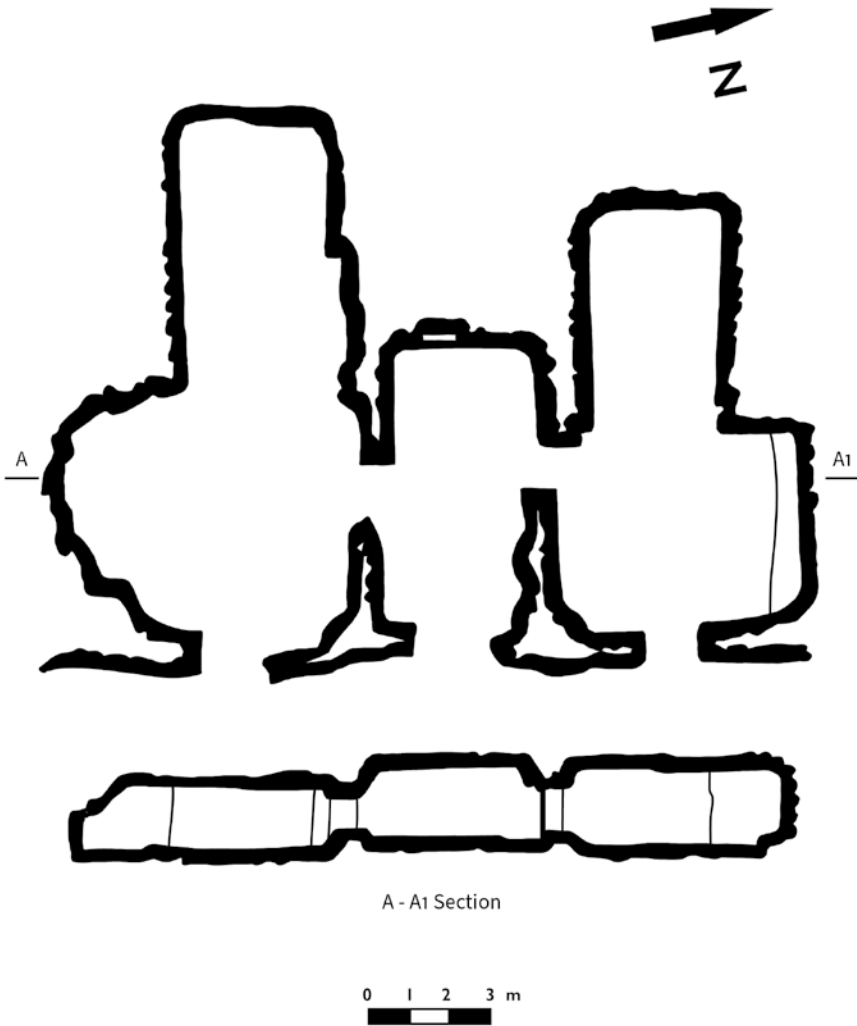


FIGURE 34 Plan of the Klise Maara cave complex in Īailata (after Atanasov, "Nĭakolko skalni manastira," fig. 3g)

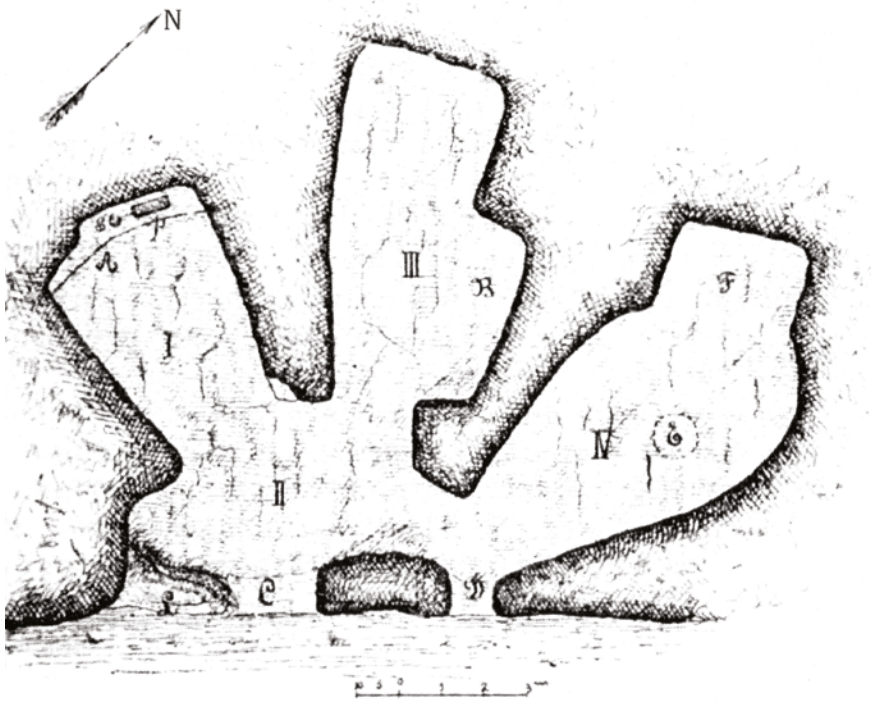


FIGURE 35 Plan of the so-called “Sts. Constantine and Helena Church” in Iailata (after Shkorpil and Shkorpil, “Severoiztochna Bŭlgariã (1),” p. 59, fig. 9)

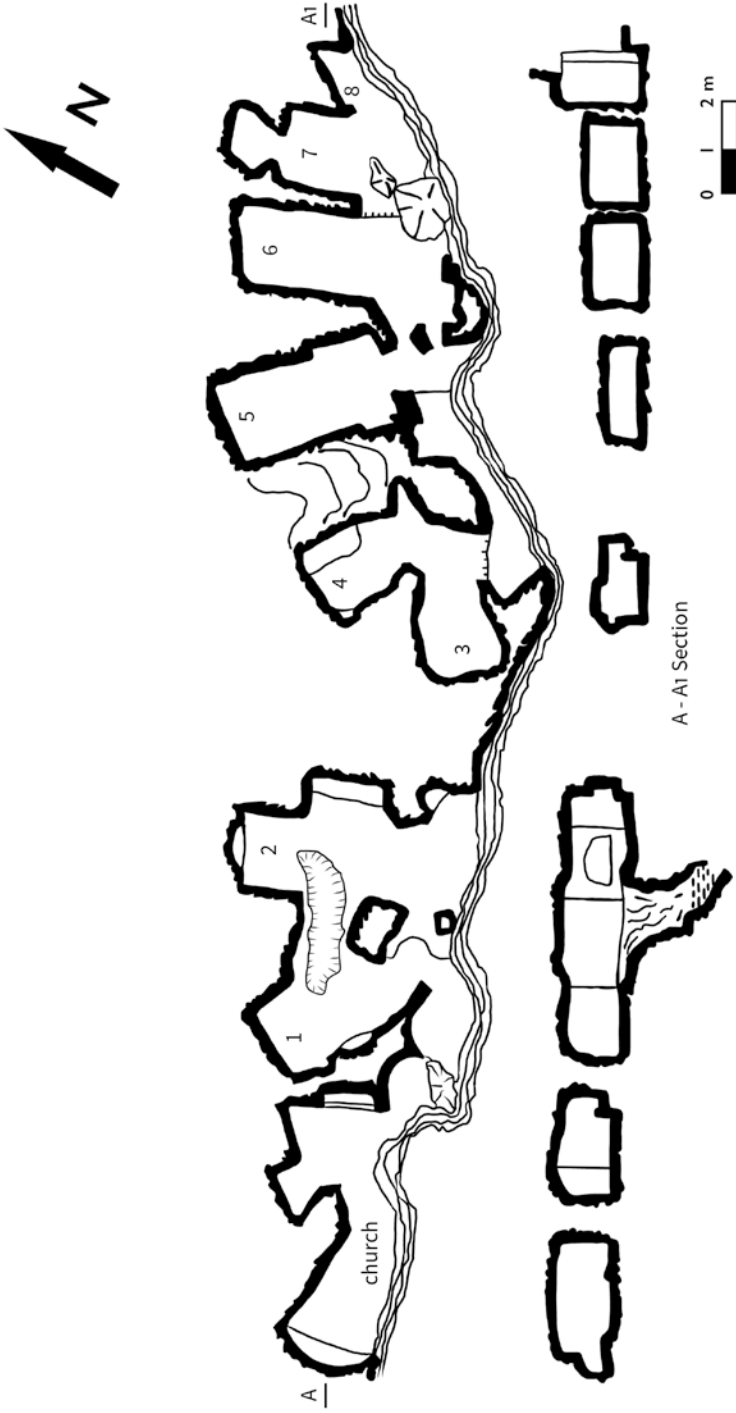


FIGURE 36 Plan of the cave monastery in Iaiłata (after Atanasov, "Něakolko skalni manastira," fig. 1b)

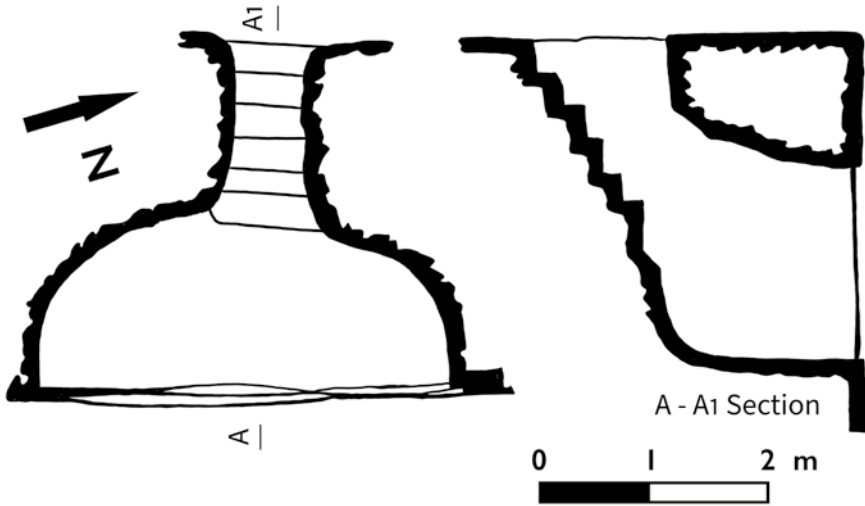


FIGURE 37 Plan of the cell 'C11' in Īailata (after Atanasov, "Nĭakolko skalni manastira," fig. 3e)

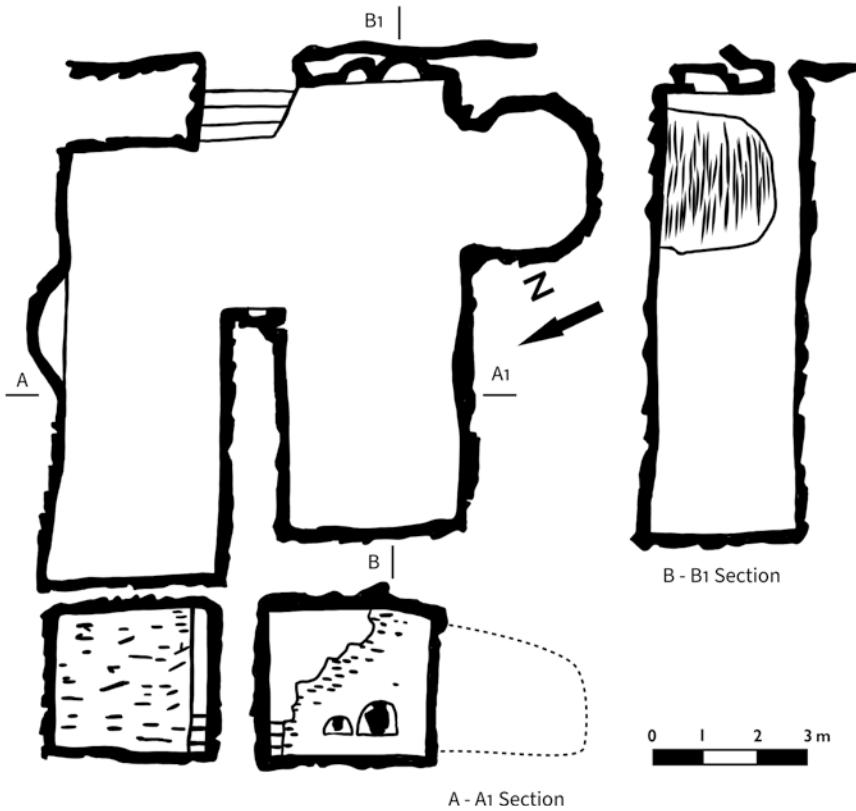


FIGURE 38 Plan of the cells 'C12' and 'C13' in the cave monastery in Īailata (after Atanasov, "Nĭakolko skalni manastira," fig. 3d)

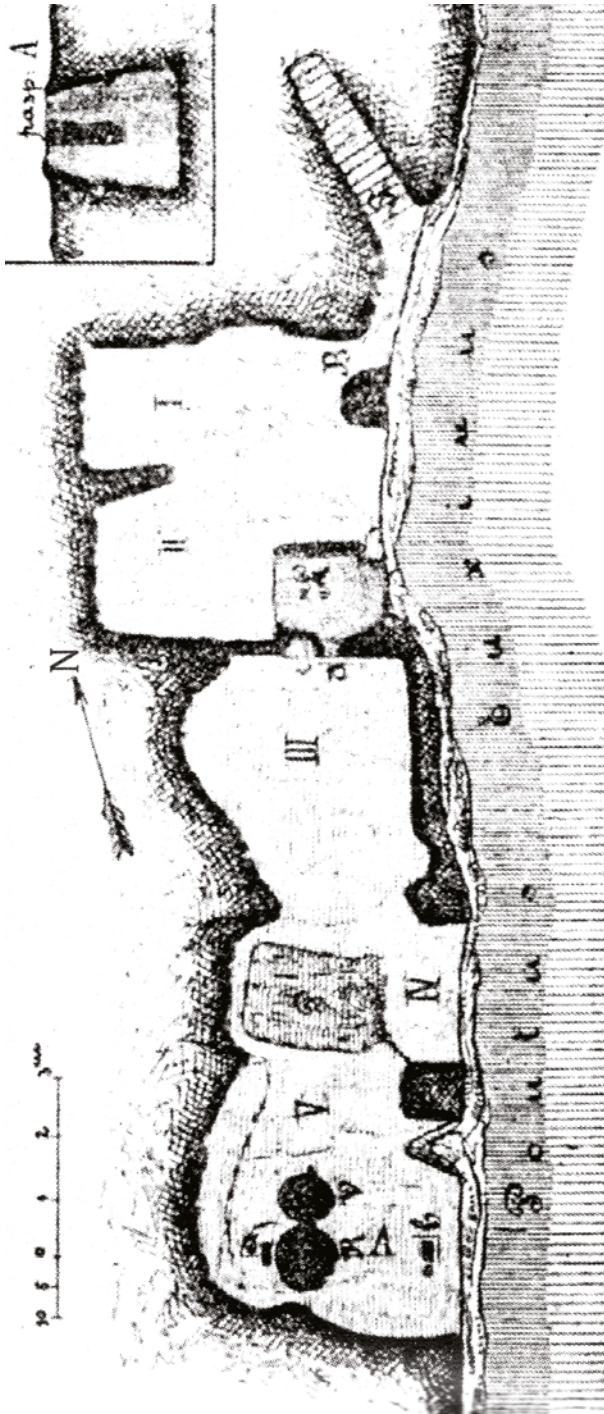
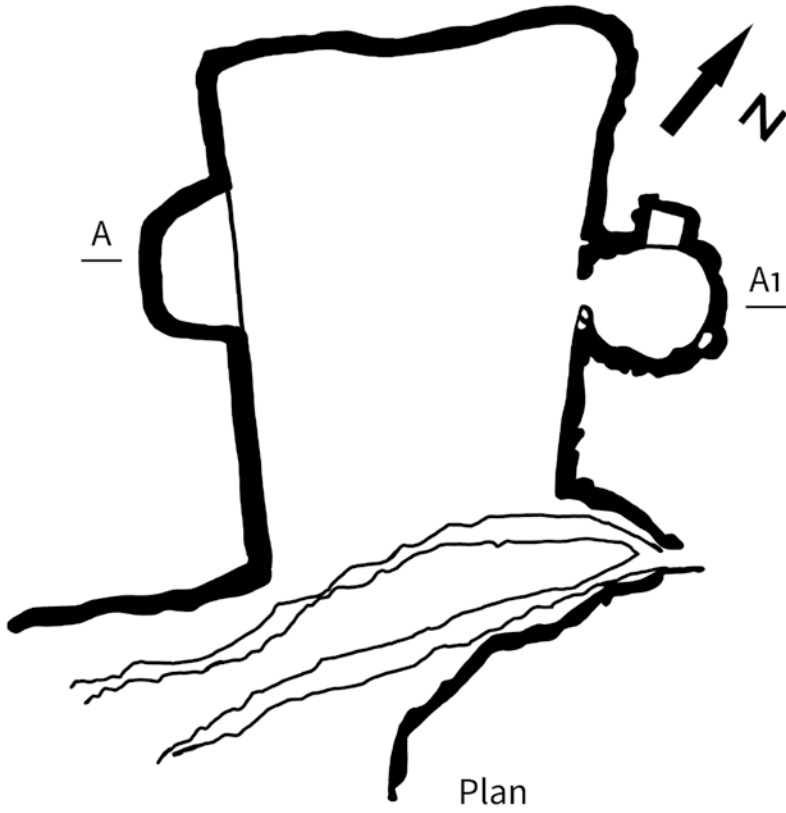


FIGURE 41 Plan of the Merdeveni Maara cave complex near Tŭlenovo (after Shkorpil and Shkorpil, "Severoiztochna Bŭlgariĭa (1)", p. 53, fig. 5)



A - A1 Section

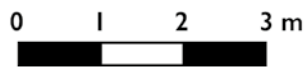


FIGURE 42 Plan of the cave chapel near Tūlenovo (after Atanasov, "Rannovizantiiški skalni fšūrki," p. 35, fig. 5)

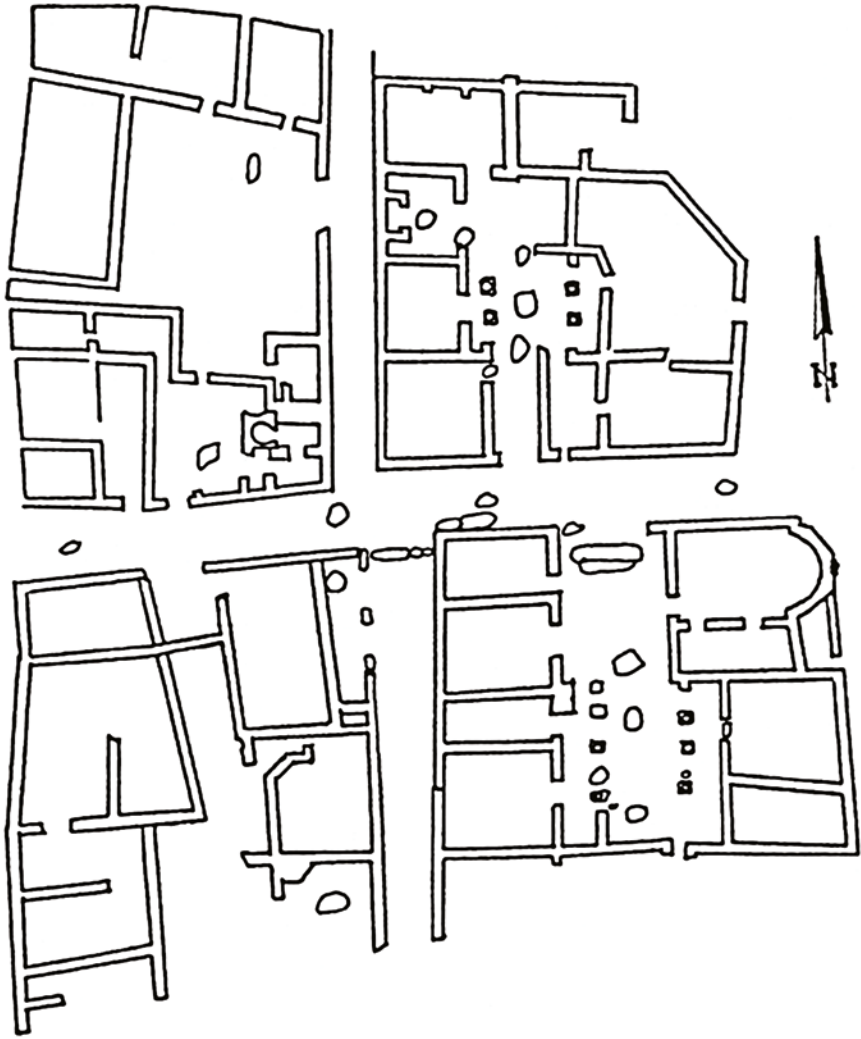


FIGURE 43 Plan of the *Domus* neighbourhood in Histria (after Bounegru and Lungu, "Histria," p. 169, fig. 2)

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At present, there is no scholarly consensus on the ecclesiastical organization in the Roman province of Scythia (4th–7th centuries). This volume proposes a new interpretation of some of the historical evidence concerning the evolution of the see of Tomi: a great metropolis, first with suffragan bishoprics outside Roman Scythia and then inside it, and later an autocephalous archbishopric.

Though there are also many unclear aspects regarding the evolution of monastic life in the province, this book reveals that, in contrast with the development of the monastic infrastructure in Roman Scythia, a spiritual decline began in the mid-5th century.

